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Adventure

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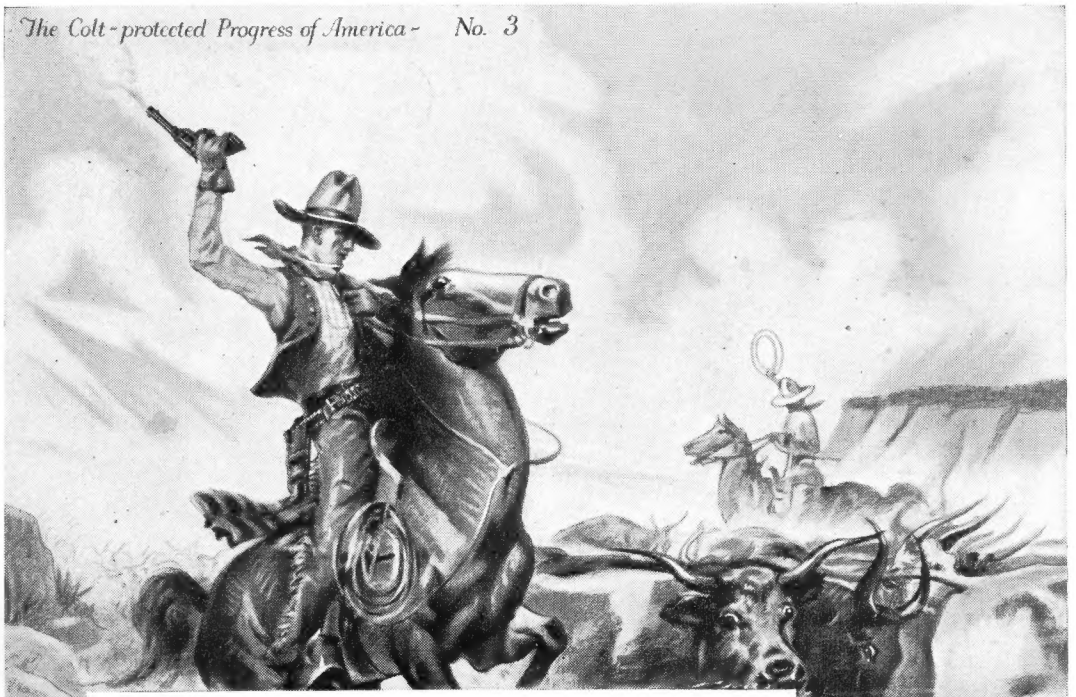

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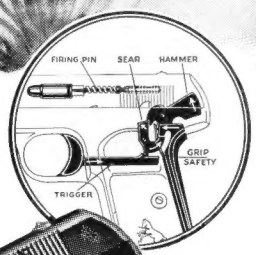

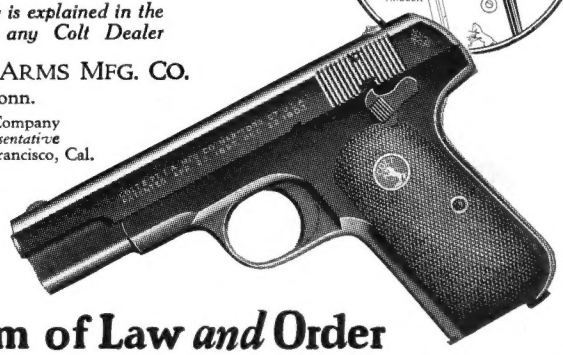

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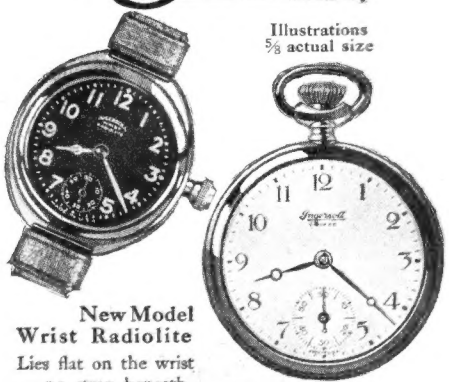

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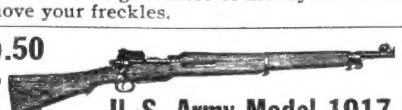

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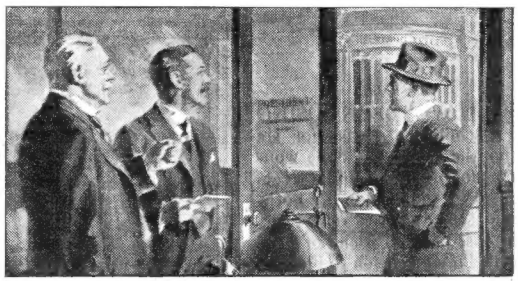

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July 8th, 1926

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Volume 59
Number 1

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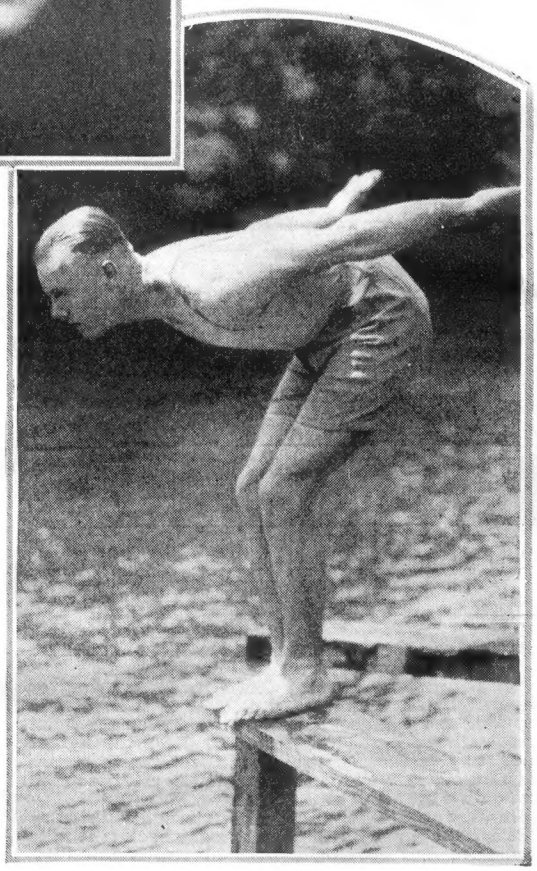

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ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of *Adventure*, published twice a month at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1926. State of New York, County of New York, *ss.* Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Editor of *Adventure* and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., 'of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are: Publisher, THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. Editor, ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, 223 Spring Street, New York City. Managing Editor, none. Business Manager, none. 2. That the owner is THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City, whose stockholders are: THE FEDERAL PUBLISHING COMPANY, a corporation, 15 Exchange Place, Jersey City, N. J., whose stockholder is: THE BUTTERICK COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City, whose stockholders are: BLOCK, MALONEY & CO., 74 Broadway, New York City; CHISHOLM & CHAPMAN, 52 Broadway, New York City; FREDERICK J. HART, care of Moore & Schley, 100 Broadway, New York City; S. R. LATSHAW, 237 West 74th Street, New York City; LAIDLAW & CO., 26 Broadway, New York City; NOYES & JACKSON, 42 Broadway, New York City; LAURA J. O'LOUGHLIN, 514 West 114th Street, New York City; MRS. ARETHUSA POND, Bretton Hall, 86th Street and Broadway, New York City; CHARLES D. RAFFERTY as sole surviving successor Trustee of the Estate of WM. H. GELSHENEN, Deceased, 81 Fulton Street, New York City; FRED SIEGMUND, care of Moore & Schley, 100 Broadway, New York City; WHITEHOUSE & COMPANY, 111 Broadway, New York City; G. W. WILDER, 41 Fifth Avenue, New York City; B. F. WILDER, Bell and Maxwell Aves., Bayside, Long Island, New York; W. J. WOLLMAN & CO., 120 Broadway, New York City. *That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are:* None. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor. Sworn to and subcribed before me this 30th day of March, 1926. BLEVINS C. DUNKLIN, Notary Public, New York County. County Clerk's No. 179, Register No. 7118; Bronx County Clerk's No. 9, Register No. 2710; Kings County Clerk's No. 18, Register No. 7076. (*My commission expires March* 30, 1927.) (SEAL.) Form 3526—Ed. 1924.

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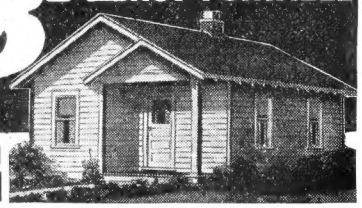

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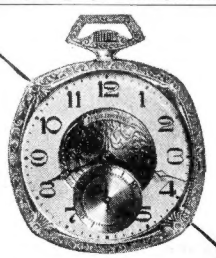

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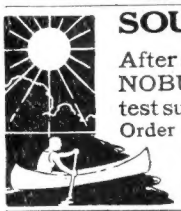

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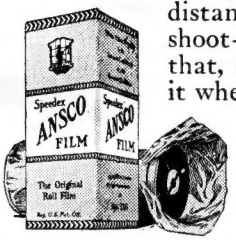

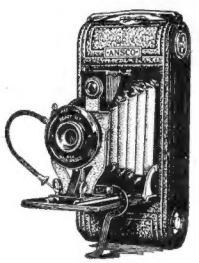

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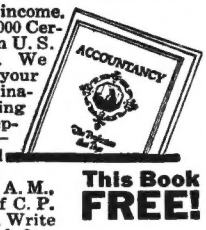

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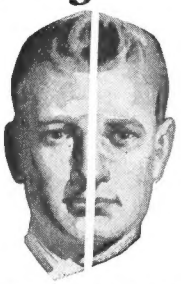

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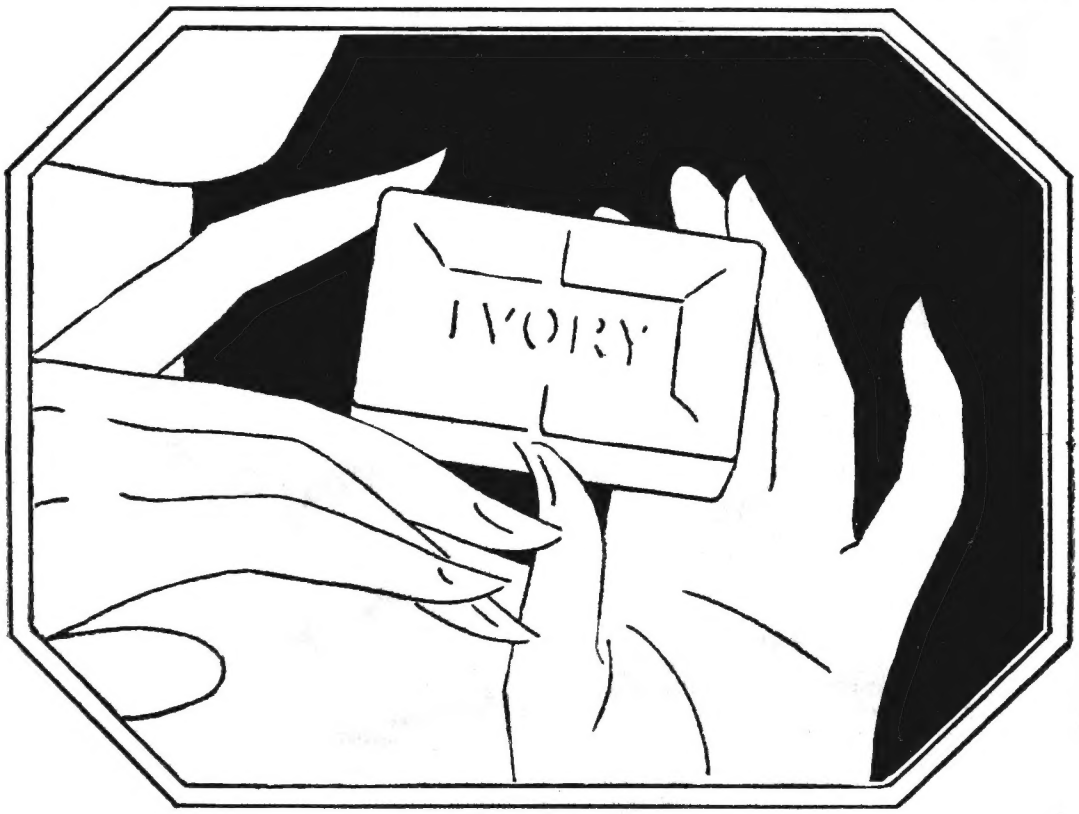

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Vol. LIX, No. 1 , July 8th 1926

The Range of Restitution

A Complete Novelette by W. C. Tuttle

Author of "Hashknife of the Diamond H," "The Tin God of Twisted River," etc.

IT WAS late in the fall when Hashknife Hartley and Sleepy Stevens had ridden in to the town of Ghost Dance; two well mounted cowpunchers, drifting toward the desert ranges to spend the winter; but fate decreed otherwise.

The Ghost Dance range was subject to blizzards in winter, and within three hours after they had ridden into town, one of the worst blizzards of the season swept down the valley, and when it finally broke, Ghost Dance Valley was snow-bound.

The roads were blocked; cattle starving, freezing; so Hashknife and Sleepy accepted jobs with the Bar 44, and became hay-shoveling cowboys. Blizzard after blizzard swept the length and breadth of the range, and there was little rest for the cattlemen.

From daylight till dark they fought to keep the water-holes open, breaking trails, shoveling hay; fighting a bitter battle to save the stock. Old Mark Griswold, owner of the Bar 44, formed a great affection for Hashknife Hartley, whose long, lean body seemed tireless, his sense of humor keeping every one in good spirits, and made him foreman, when spring came again to Ghost Dance.

While Hashknife appreciated it greatly, he did not want the position. The lure of the next place was in his blood. Sleepy Stevens was of the same idea. For years he and Hashknife had ridden from range to range, never satisfied, always squinting toward the next range of hills, wondering what might be beyond it. From Alberta to Mexico—always they were going somewhere, and never getting there.

Then came the spring round-up, when

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every rider in the Ghost Dance worked mightily, and thousands of head of cattle were bunched and held on the big flats north of the town. The winter losses had been heavy, attested to by the fact that every ranch had hide-hung fences, mute evidence of the power of King Blizzard. But there were other losses, which were evident after the tally had been made.

The Bar 44's fall tally had showed that they were going to winter three thousand head. Sixty Bar 44 hides decorated the fences around the ranch, possibly the smallest loss sustained by any of the Ghost Dance ranches; but the spring tally showed only twenty-six hundred head—a loss of three hundred and forty, exclusive of those which perished in the blizzards.

A check of the other ranches showed that the Half-Circle N had only started the winter with five hundred head, and their present tally was so scant that old Jack Noon swore he would have to buy beefsteak before the first of April. The Half-Circle N did not raise any hay, and Jack Noon was really too poor to buy cattle feed, which advanced to top prices during the winter, and as a result he had little or no chance to check up on his herd until after the winter was over.

Bob Le Saint, of the Mission Cross L, swore feelingly over his loss of about three hundred, exclusive of the hundred and eighty hides on his home-ranch fences. Buck Rahl, owner of the Seven R, had been fortunate enough to sell heavily in the fall, and only wintered about a hundred head, which showed about a seventy-five per cent. loss, including those killed by the blizzards.

Buck Rahl's cattle were scattered when the blizzard struck the country; so he made no effort to handle them. In fact, all the herds were scattered, and no man even thought of checking them up, because they figured their only losses would be from the winter-kills. Bar 44's fed with the Mission Cross cattle, and the Mission Cross cattle followed the hay-shovelers of the Bar 44. It was the same all over the country. Cattle were fed, regardless of their ownership.

Taking it all in all, there was plenty of reason for the cattlemen to wonder just what had become of these animals. It was easy enough for them to find the winter-kills. In most cases they were able to skin them in time to save the hides from the wolves and coyotes, which fed royally all winter.

The cattlemen held a meeting at Ghost Dance, but nothing came of it. Their losses were evident, but no one offered a theory of any value.

"They must 'a' had wings," declared old Jack Noon, grizzled veteran of the range. "Flyin' is the only theory I've got."

"Do yuh reckon there's any hopes of 'em flyin' back home?" asked Hashknife seriously.

Noon shook his head slowly.

"I've knowed 'em to fly away in other places, Hartley, and they seemed to kinda lose all sense of direction, when it comes to headin' home. They've jist about broke me, with their flyin' foolishness."

Noon's ranch was small. Bill Noon, the son, a big, strapping, rosy-cheeked cowboy, about twenty-five years of age, helped his father manage the ranch, while Mrs. Noon, Aunt Jimmy, to everybody, kept house for them. Never seeming to have much money, always striving to get a start, the Half-Circle N had worn out many welcome mats on the front porch.

Hashknife liked the Noon family, and he never overlooked a chance to drop off his horse at the Half-Circle N and have a chat with Aunt Jimmy, a frail little woman, white-haired, severe of countenance, but with twinkling blue eyes, and a deep sense of humor.

"Lor-dee, I've got to see the funny side of life," she told Hashknife one day, while he warmed his hands at the kitchen stove and partook of a fresh doughnut. "Things never break right for us, it seems. Jim and Bill work all the time. Jim's a God-fearin' sort of a feller, but I don't reckon Bill fears anythin'—except Mazie Neilan."

Hashknife had often seen Mazie Neilan. Her father owned the stage line, which ran from Ghost Dance to Broken Falls. Mazie was a tall, brown-haired girl. Hashknife knew she had pretty eyes and nice teeth. He hadn't analyzed the rest of her features.

"What's Bill scared of her for?" Hashknife had asked.

"'Cause he's in love with her. You've been in love, ain't yuh, Mr. Hartley?"

Hashknife grinned widely, his wide mouth full of doughnut, a streak of grease across the bridge of his long, thin nose.

"Yea-a-a-ah," he drawled. "With

doughnuts, hot stoves in the winter—and white-haired, motherly wimmin."

"Oh, pshaw!" Aunt Jimmy shook a finger at him. "I mean—honest to goodness in love."

"A-a-a-aw, lotsa times, Aunt Jimmy. I 'member a Navajo girl that I met—"

"Yo're foolin', young man!"

"That's what she said," grinned Hashknife sheepishly. "No ma'am, I don't monkey with love very much. I leave that to Sleepy Stevens. He's the lovin'est man yuh ever seen."

"Your bow-legged pardner? I never know just what to make of him. What's he laughin' at all the time?"

"At the world, I reckon. He's thinkin' all the time of somethin' funny to do, and it makes him grin."

"I suppose that's it. You two boys think a lot of each other, don'tcha?"

Hashknife nodded slowly.

"About all there is, I reckon."

THE strain of a hard winter made little difference in the physical appearance of Ghost Dance town. There was one long, gray street, humpy and pitted from the mud, bordered by a conglomerate of frame buildings, bravely decrepid with their false fronts. The uneven wooden sidewalks sagged badly in spots, humped in others, and were warped so badly from the below-zero weather that hardly a cross-board remained nailed in place.

Many hitch-racks bordered the sidewalks, where cow ponies had dug and pawed at the ground, until most of them were obliged to stand in a high-behind attitude, while waiting for their lords and sometime masters.

There were faded beer signs in front of the saloons. A general merchandise sign, once bravely lettered in black and gold, running the full width of the store front, one end a foot higher than the other, gave the place rather a rakish air.

An old rusty pump near the livery stable was creaking painfully under the manipulation of a frowsy-looking stable-man, who pumped with one hand, holding four lead-ropes with the other, and using one foot in a futile effort to keep a roan horse from putting his feet in the trough.

A rider, leading a pack-horse, came slowly up the street and halted in front of the general store. He was of medium height, lean-faced, as dark as an aborigine; handsome in spite of the high cheek-bones, which proclaimed him a half-breed. On his head he wore a shapeless sombrero which had once been tan color, now soiled and smoke-blackened.

His shirt was of faded yellow calico, and his vest little more than a string. His chaps were of black sheepskin, rubbed bare in spots, and an old Army buckle, corroded with age, held together the old cartridge belt, which sagged from the weight of a black-handled Colt. But around his neck, as if to add a high note of color, was a glaring, scarlet muffler. Such was Enos Riggs, trapper, cowpuncher, son of a nondescript trapper and a Flathead squaw.

Swiftly he unpacked his horse, taking off several burlap-covered bundles, which emitted a none-too-sweet odor. It was the season's catch of the half-breed, whose winter home was an old cabin about fifteen miles back in the hills from Ghost Dance.

Enos was a good cowboy, and might well have had a job at any of the ranches during the winter, but he preferred to run a trap-line, where he might, if luck ran his way, do better than the usual forty dollars per month and grub.

As Enos piled the bundles of raw furs on the sidewalk, Al Cooper, proprietor of the store, a tall, brown-mustached man, slightly stooped, came out and greeted Enos warmly. For a number of years Cooper had bought Enos' furs at a price satisfactory to both.

"Glad to see you back, Enos," said Cooper, as they shook hands. "Pretty tough winter, eh?"

Enos grinned, showing an expanse of white teeth.

"Pretty cold, you bet. How's Ghost Dance?"

"Thawing out," laughed Cooper. "How was the catch this winter?"

"Just fair. More marten, less mink. I got one white wolf. Oh, a beauty. Not much fox this year. How's prices, Cooper?"

"I'll be darned if I just know, Enos. Haven't had a list of prices this spring, but I imagine you'll get more than last season. If I take these I'll have to ask you to wait until that new price-list comes in, because I don't want to cheat you."

Enos rubbed his chin, squinting at the burlap bundles. Then:

"Last spring I get a good price, Cooper.

You pay me same as last time and I be satisfied."

"That's square of you, Enos, but I'm sure prices are higher."

"All right—you make more—I'm satisfied. We take 'em in house and make a count, eh? You're square, Al Cooper."

As they started to pick up the bundles Mazie Neilan came from the store. Enos straightened up and flashed her a smile as he took off his old hat.

"Hello, Miss Neilan," he said. The girl smiled at him and held out her hand.

"Hello, Enos. You're quite a stranger around here."

"Been trappin' all winter," he laughed. "Now I come back and learn to talk again."

"Well, we're glad to see you back," she replied. "Did you have good luck?"

Enos shook his head slowly.

"I never have good luck—much. How's your father?"

"Oh, he's fine, thank you."

Mazie smiled and went on down the street, while Enos looked after her, paying no attention to Cooper's conversation. The storekeeper squinted at Enos and at the girl.

"Nice looking girl," offered Cooper. Enos turned back to him, but did not reply to Cooper's expression.

"I want to see that white wolf," said Cooper, as he picked up a bundle of the skins. "If it's a good one, I'll keep it for myself."

"Very good skin," said Enos thoughtfully. "White wolf pretty scarce, Cooper; I keep it for myself."

Cooper glanced quickly at the half-breed, but Enos had turned his head and was looking down the street. Cooper smiled as he went toward the door, knowing well that Enos had held out the white wolf as a present to Mazie Neilan. And Cooper also knew that this was not so good, because Enos was a half-breed.

MAZIE met her father at the stage-office. Frank Neilan was just past fifty years of age, a stout, pursy sort of a man, addicted to heavy watch-chains and squeaky boots. He was slightly deaf, and it is barely possible that he preferred creaking boots so he could hear himself walking. Neilan had no objections to Bill Noon personally, but he did object to Mazie's marrying a man who had no more prospects than Bill had. And Neilan took pains to point out Bill's shortcomings at every opportunity.

"I just hired a new driver," he told Mazie. "Clem Allard decided that he was tired of drivin'. He's always talkin' about goin' to Calcutta. Calcutta! By golly, I up and asked him where Calcutta was last night, and the darn fool didn't know. He said it was near where they ride on elephants and shoot tigers. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Imagine Clem Allard forkin' an elephant!"

Mazie grinned. Clem Allard was a lean, buck-toothed cowboy, who played a harmonica, and who always prefaced his own lies with—

"Honest t' ——, yuh won't believe this, but it's true—"

"But who did you hire in Clem's place, Dad?" she asked.

"Lee Wells. He just drifted in about an hour ago. Been winterin' on a ranch in the Dry Lake country. Must 'a' hurt his foot over in that country, 'cause he limps kinda bad. But Lee's a good driver, Mazie."

"When he keeps sober."

"Oh, he's sober enough. Told me he never took a drink all winter."

"Dad, you'd believe anybody."

Lee Wells was well known in the Ghost Dance country; a big hulk of a man, dark, slow-moving—possibly the best rider in that part of the State. His hair was slightly gray, although he was not over thirty years of age. He was coming from the livery-stable as Mazie and her father came back to the door.

Wells shook hands with Mazie, drawling softly:

"Shore glad to see yuh, Miss Neilan. You git better lookin' every day—yuh do so."

"You haven't changed much," she smiled critically, ignoring his compliment.

"Me? Pshaw, I'll never change. It's right good to be back in Ghost Dance. I shore got tired of the desert. But it's a good place to spend the winter."

Hashknife and Sleepy were riding into town, and Lee looked at them appraisingly.

"Who are them boys?" he asked Neilan.

"The tall one is named Hartley," replied Neilan. "He's foreman of the Bar 44. The other one is his pardner, Stevens. They've been here all winter."

"Uh-huh," Lee turned back to Neilan.

"How did the Ghost Dance stock winter?"

"Not so bad—from the winter, Lee. From what I can learn, there's a lot of stock missin' around here. Old Jim Noon is almost cleaned plumb out."

"What did yuh mean when yuh said about it not bein' bad from the winter, Frank?"

"A lot of cows," said Neilan softly, "seems to have evaporated. It's easy to find them that died from storms."

Lee Wells rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Sounds interestin', t' say the least, Frank. I always said that nothin' ever happens in Ghost Dance Valley—but it has, I reckon."

Hashknife and Sleepy came across the street, and Neilan introduced them to Lee Wells, after they shook hands with Mazie.

Sleepy was slightly below medium height, broad shouldered, bow-legged. His face was blocky, heavily lined, and he seemed to wear a perpetual grin, which was belied by the calm, innocent expression of his blue eyes.

"I'm sure glad to meetcha both," said Wells. "Neilan was tellin' me that you boys have been with the Bar 44 all winter."

"We got snowed in here," laughed Hashknife. "Didn't intend to stay here at all, yuh see. But it wasn't a bad place to hive up for the winter. Folks have been pretty nice to me and Sleepy."

"You aimin' to leave here?" queried Wells.

"No-o-o-o, not for a while."

"Uh-huh. I just got here today. Been over in the Dry Lake country all winter."

"Over on the desert, eh? Punchin' cows?"

"Yeah—with the Box AVB. But I got tired of it; so I comes back and lands a job drivin' stage for Neilan. Do all my ridin' on a seat now."

"I never done much desert ridin'," said Hashknife, as he rolled a cigaret. "I'd kinda like to try it out some winter. Is that Box AVB a big outfit?"

"Not very big. Mostly always there's only four men besides the owner."

"I was just tellin' Lee about the cattle disappearin'," said Neilan.

Hashknife scratched a match on the wall and puffed thoughtfully.

"Sounded kinda funny," offered Wells.

"Well, I dunno anythin' about it," declared Hashknife. "Me and Sleepy wasn't here for the fall round-up, yuh see. All I know is that they claim a big loss, and we sure scoured the hills for winter-kills."

"How many head did the Bar 44 lose?" asked Wells.

"They lost about three hundred and forty, outside of about sixty that died in blizzards."

Lee Wells whistled softly.

"That many?"

"Jim Noon must 'a' lost more than that," said Neilan.

Mazie left them and went toward her home, which was just on the outskirts of Ghost Dance, a modest, little, once-white cottage, where the climbing roses around the porch were beginning to bud their leaves in the spring sun. Mrs. Neilan had passed to her great reward several years previous; so Mazie was housekeeper for her father.

Lee Wells crossed the street with Hashknife and Sleepy, to the Tom-Tom saloon and gambling house where he demonstrated the fact that a dry winter had given him a great thirst. He limped heavily on his left foot, although it did not seem to pain him.

"Sharp-shod bronc stepped on me last winter," he explained. "And he jist naturally sheared off four of my toes. All I got left is the little one on that foot."

Clem Allard joined them at the bar, congratulating Wells on his new job.

"I got a-plenty," declared Allard. "One winter like the last one shore cured me of drivin' stage. Well, here's down yore elementary canal, gents. May yore shadder never grow less."

They crooked their elbows in acknowledgment of the toast.

"You better not slide too far down the social scale with yore drinkin', Lee," advised Clem. "Frank Neilan shore don't like to have his drivers look upon the wine when she's red-colored."

"I took a job—not a pledge," growled Wells, drawing cabalistic figures on the bar with a wet finger. "I've stayed sober ever since last fall."

"You'll prob'ly be the biggest liar in Ghost Dance, after I go away," sighed Allard.

"Where the —— are you goin'?"

"CALCUTTER."

"Calcutter — what — where?" demanded Wells.

"Well, f'r —— sake!" sneered Allard loftily. "You mean to stand there and ask—that's what a feller gets for livin'

in a dry climate in the winter. Bartender, do yore duty."

"You ain't told nobody where it is," reminded Wells.

"Nossir," Allard shook his head. "Anybody that's so —— ignorant as all that don't deserve to know. You know, don't yuh, Sleepy?"

"Oh, sure," said Sleepy seriously. "It's on the northwest section of township six, Malay Arky-pelago."

"Well, yea-a-a-ah," drawled Allard. "That's drawin' the compass pretty fine. I didn't edzactly know jist the township. You must 'a' been readin' up on it."

"You ain't never been there, yuh know," reminded Wells.

"I ain't?" Allard opened his eyes widely. "Well, well! Honest t' ——, you prob'ly won't believe me, but it's a fact. When I was—"

"Say, I've been wonderin' all winter where I'd seen you!" exclaimed Sleepy, interrupting Allard. "Do you remember the time I comes down there to buy elephants for the Swedish Government?"

"Do I?" Allard fairly chortled. "My ——, I sold yuh six out of my own cavvy, didn't I? 'Member that roan with the pink eyes?"

"Roan elephants!" snorted Wells.

"Why not?" asked Sleepy innocently.

"Who the —— ever seen a roan elephant?"

"You didn't, of course," said Sleepy patiently. "The only kind they ever ship to this country are the darker shades. They keep better. My ——, this western sun wouldn't do a thing to a colored elephant."

"Fade it to a whisper inside of a week," nodded Allard, as he poured a fresh drink.

"Well, what in —— would a Swede want of an elephant?" demanded Wells, taking his drink at a single gulp and making a wry face over it.

"They milk 'em," choked Sleepy, wiping his eyes.

"And that's one of the queerest sights yuh ever seen," declared Allard. "Honest to ——, yuh probably won't believe me, but it's true—every word of it. When I was in Sweden—"

"Aw, let up!" snorted Wells. "You ain't never been out of this State in yore life, Clem. I dunno where Stevens has been, but I won't stand for no Swede milkin' an elephant—anyway, not a roan one with pink eyes. Let's have another."

"That's what makes so many ignorant people in this country," sighed Allard. "They gets kinda set on things. Travel shore does broaden a man. And I don't mean the kind of travelin' yuh get between here and Broken Falls. That don't broaden yuh none to speak about, but it shore does callous yuh a heap."

Hashknife could see how this simple little gathering might lead to a wild party; so he was glad when Ben Erway, the sheriff from Broken Falls, came in. Broken Falls was the county seat, and was located twenty miles south of Ghost Dance, on the railroad.

THE sheriff was a wiry little man, deadly serious, neglecting no chance to fulfill his oath of office. He shook hands with the four men at the bar, accepted a drink and then drew Hashknife to the opposite side of the room, where they sat down at a card-table.

"I've been wantin' to talk with yuh about the missin' stock," said the sheriff, lowering his voice. "It sure puzzles me, Hartley. It looks to me as though some wholesale rustlin' has been goin' on—but who and how? Ghost Dance Valley ain't no place to move cows out of in the winter time."

"Broken Falls is the nearest shippin' point," mused Hashknife.

"——, they never took 'em out through Broken Falls. Nobody ever shipped a cow out of there in the winter. No-o-o," the sheriff shook his head, "they never took 'em through there. Why, the loss shows about eleven hundred head, mebbe more. I tell yuh, that's a lot of cows, Hartley."

Hashknife nodded thoughtfully.

"Yeah, it is, Sheriff. Me and Sleepy came in from the north last fall, comin' out of Poway Valley, and it's a cinch they never took 'em out that way. They'd have to go out through Shoshone Pass, and from October until a short time ago the railroad folks had to keep a rotary snow-plow busy all the time in there. The snow got as deep as sixteen feet."

"It's that deep on the divide all around us," declared the sheriff. "I tell yuh, it's impossible to take that many cattle out of this valley in the winter. What's yore theory?"

"I haven't any," smiled Hashknife.

"I wonder if yuh haven't."

Hashknife squinted at the little sheriff.

"Why?" he asked.

The sheriff leaned his elbows on the table and studied the face of the tall cowboy for several moments. Then—

"I wrote a letter to the Cattlemen's Association, Hartley. I thought they'd like a report on this proposition. I gave 'em the names of the foremen and owners, in case they wanted to write, and I mentioned you as foreman of the Bar 44. The secretary answered right away and advised me to talk with you about it. He said you'd prob'ly know who done it."

Hashknife grinned at the serious sheriff.

"I suppose Albert K. Miller is still the secretary."

"Yeah, that's the name."

"Well, you can write and tell him that I said I was just a cowpuncher—not a detective."

"Thasall right, Hartley," the sheriff's eyes twinkled. "Nobody askin' yuh to turn detective—but Ghost Dance can't afford to lose that many cows. I understand it has jist about broke Jim Noon."

"Well, they're gone," said Hashknife. "Nothin' we can do will ever bring 'em back—nor pay for 'em, Sheriff."

"But we can stop 'em from takin' any more, Hartley."

"Yea-a-a-ah, we might do that."

Sleepy, Wells and Allard were having a heated argument over what year the War of 1812 was started, and how it compared with the Cuban campaign. Wells insisted that Hashknife and the sheriff join the controversy, but those two worthy gentlemen excused themselves and went outside to continue their conversation.

"I wonder what the sheriff wanted of Hartley?" said Allard, whose tongue was getting a trifle thick.

"He prob'ly," said Sleepy, trying to brush a button off Wells' vest, "he prob'ly wants Hashknife to tell him who stole all the cattle from the Ghost Dance country."

"How'd Hartley know that?" demanded Allard.

"Mind-readin'," said Sleepy seriously. "Didn't yuh know Hashknife was a mind-reader? Yuh didn't? He's one of the very, very best."

"Oh, ——!" snorted Wells. "That's on a par with the pinto elephants. Let's sing a song, eh?"

"Not a note," declared Allard. "You sober up, Lee. If you get drunk you'll lose yore job with Neilan, and he'll want me to go to work again."

Hashknife and the sheriff saw Enos Riggs leave Cooper's store, carrying a burlap covered bundle, and go toward the stage station.

"Who's the jigger with the cutthroat muffler?" asked Hashknife.

"Enos Riggs, a half-breed," said the sheriff. "He runs a winter trap-line out west of here, and punches cows in the summer. I reckon he just brought in his furs to Cooper."

"Who did he work for last summer?"

"Le Saint—Mission Cross L. Enos is a good man with cattle, even if his mother was a Flathead squaw. He behaves himself."

THEY sauntered over to the store and found Bob Le Saint trying on a new pair of boots. Le Saint was a gaunt old man, with a pockmarked face, knobby shoulders, wrists and knees. Hashknife had said that he expected Le Saint to rattle when he walked.

He yanked off a new boot, spat disgustedly and shook hands with the sheriff, whom he had not seen for some time.

"I'm not a —— bit vain about my feet, Al," he told the storekeeper. "You keep on givin' me number nines, and I'll go to Broken Falls for my boots. I want tens and a half. How's crime, Sheriff?"

"Still thrivin', it seems to me, Le Saint."

"Yeah, and it always will. I dunno that I blame a man for stealin' cows. It costs so —— much to raise 'em honestly these days. Next winter I'm not goin' to have any. I'll be danged if I'm goin' to dry-nurse cattle through blizzards for some sticky-rope cowboy to steal."

"What's yore theory, Le Saint?" asked the sheriff smiling.

"Good ——, if I had a theory to my name I'd not raise cattle for a livin'. It's like tryin' to make two deuces beat a full house. I hate —— out of a thief, but I can see his viewpoint."

"But," smiled the sheriff, "if the cattle men catch him, he gets hung."

"Sure he does. And if he tries to raise 'em honestly, he starves to death."

"I reckon there's some wisdom in that," laughed the sheriff, turning to Hashknife. "What do you think, Hartley?"

"Well," grinned Hashknife, "I'm in favor of restrainin' 'em a little. If yuh don't kill off a few of 'em once in a while, they'll put the cattlemen all out of business. Cattlemen, not havin' brains enough to make a livin' in any other way, will starve to death, and the rustler, shut off from the only way he knows of makin' a livin', will also starve."

Le Saint cocked one eye and examined a new boot.

"Well, I suppose you're right, Hartley. I'd shore hate to send a lot of —— cattle rustlers to the poorhouse; so I reckon I better keep on supportin' 'em."

Enos Riggs came in, still carrying the burlap bundle. He edged along the counter, examining the few things in the old show-cases. Hashknife studied the half-breed closely. He knew the type; ignorant, but shrewd, easily influenced; reverting to the aborigine when drinking. He watched Enos lean on the counter, his red-flecked brown eyes fixed upon some cheap watches, his left foot on top of the right—all Indian now.

"Hyah, Enos!" called Le Saint.

Enos looked up, smiling slightly.

"Hyah, Mr. Le Saint!"

He moved on down the counter, slowly lifting the bundle to the counter, as Cooper approached him.

"Something you wanted, Enos?" asked Cooper.

"Um-m-m-m," muttered Enos slowly. He indicated the bundle.

"You pay me ten dollar for white wolf skin?"

Cooper looked quickly at Enos, but the half-breed's eyes were staring down at the bundle.

"Sure, I'll take it, Enos."

He opened a drawer beneath the counter, counted out ten silver dollars, shoved them across to Enos and dropped the bundle in the corner. The half-breed slowly counted the money, put it in his pocket and went out, his spurs jingling across the rough floor.

FOR several days Hashknife puzzled over the situation. He had no clue, nothing to use as a starting point. He talked it over with Mark Griswold, who knew every inch of the valley and surrounding ranges, but there was absolutely no place where a herd of cattle might be taken in winter, except down to Broken Falls. It was the only open road out of a snow-bound valley.

But it was very evident that the rustlers did not take them through Broken Falls.

"I wouldn't be surprized if a few head was taken out of here the winter before," said Griswold. "My spring tally was a few short that year. But it wasn't enough to make a yelp about. This time it sure is."

Griswold was a big-boned, slow-moving sort of man, who had spent most of his life in Ghost Dance, trying to make money out of cattle. Besides Hashknife and Sleepy, his force consisted of Benny O'Neil and "Nig" Stanton, both good cowpunchers, and Sing Lo, the cook, who kept a cleaver handy, in case any cowboy tried to invade his kitchen.

Spring had opened in real earnest in Ghost Dance Valley. Ghost Dance River was running bank-full of muddy water, and every stream was adding its full quota from the melting snows of the mountains. Already the hills were turning green with the new grass, and the half-starved cattle were stringing back out of the valley, warming themselves after months of bitter cold.

Jack Noon rode back from town to the Half-Circle N ranch, stabled his horse and went to the house, where he found Bill asprawl in a chair, reading an old newspaper, while Aunt Jimmy peeled potatoes for supper.

She came to the door of the living-room, a half-peeled potato in her hand.

"River's gettin' pretty high, ain't it, Dad?" asked Bill, placing his paper on the table.

"Yeah," Noon spoke abstractedly, as he sat down, staring at the floor. Finally he looked up at his wife and shook his head.

"Couldn't do it," he said slowly. "I had a long talk with Fred McGovern at the bank, but it didn't do no good. He said the bank was carryin' too much ranch paper as it is. I asked him to let me have as low as five thousand, but it was no use."

"You wanted a mortgage, Dad?" asked Bill.

"Yeah, Bill. We're right down to bedrock. I'll bet we ain't got twenty head of cattle left. I owe Cooper quite a lot of money. He's always carried us over the winter. He'll want it now. You've been a good kid—not askin' for any pay, Bill."

"Aw, that's all right, Dad. Gosh, I can't expect anythin', when things are thataway. You forget my part of it."

"You better change your boots, Pa," said Aunt Jimmy.

"Yeah, I s'pose I had," Noon got up heavily and walked up the stairs.

Bill picked up the newspaper and tried to read, but the type massed badly. His mother came over to him and put a hand on his shoulder.

"Billy, I'm proud of you," she said softly. "I know what it means to you."

He shook his head, but did not look up at her.

"It's all right, Ma. We'll pull out some way. It's sure tough on you and Dad."

"And on you, Son. Oh, I know. It has been almost six months since you drew a cent. Dad thought he could get a mortgage and pay you three hundred."

"That's all right, Ma. For gosh sake, don't cry. Forget it, I tell yuh. I—I wonder if he tried to—if he ever asked Frank Neilan to take the mortgage."

"No, I don't think so, Billy. But Neilan ain't able to take a very big mortgage."

"No, I don't suppose so. Still he might make a loan. Aw, we'll get on our feet again, Ma," Bill got to his feet and put his arms around her. "You stop cryin'. Why, geeminy gosh, Ma," he stopped and squinted painfully across her shoulder, "I ain't never asked Mazie to marry me—yet."

"You were waiting for that money, Son?"

"Well," he smiled wryly, "I—I kinda wanted to be sure. Yuh see, I had a hunch that things weren't goin' too good for Dad."

"I hope Mazie will understand," sighed Aunt Jimmy.

"She will," said Bill quickly. "She's—well, it'll all come out in the wash, Ma. Now, just forget it. I won't mention it to Dad. We'll get the money some way."

He patted her on the shoulder as she went back to the kitchen.

AFTER supper that night Bill rode to Ghost Dance, and tied his horse at the Neilan gate. Mazie and her father welcomed him warmly and he sat down in the cozy little living-room.

"Well, I suppose I better go down town and listen to the latest scandal," laughed Neilan. "Now if I wasn't hard of hearin' it would be all right for me to stay, but I'm—"

"I wish you'd stay a little while, Mr, Neilan," said Bill seriously. "I want a little talk with yuh, if I may."

"Well, I reckon yuh can, Bill," Neilan grinned widely at his own wisdom. "I suppose I'll have to say yes, anyway."

Bill flushed slightly and glanced at Mazie, but she was not looking at him just now.

"Mebbe," said Bill softly, "you won't say yes. Dad went to the bank today, askin' for a mortgage on the ranch. We're hit pretty hard, Mr. Neilan. The bank can't handle it—or won't."

Neilan scowled slightly and shook his head.

"You thought I might take it, Bill?"

"I was just wonderin'," said Bill hopefully.

"I can't," said Neilan, after a long pause. "It's more than I could stand, just now."

"Even a couple of thousand would help," said Bill.

Neilan shook his head and picked up his hat.

"I'll be fair with you, Bill; the Half-Circle N isn't a good risk. Your father has barely managed to make both ends meet up to now. He is too easy-going. It would take a lot of money to replenish the stock he has lost—and then he would only make a bare living. I'm sorry, Bill."

"Yeah," said Bill softly, "well, thank yuh just the same."

"There's nothin' to thank me for, Bill."

"For bein' honest enough to say what yuh think. We're broke. We haven't enough to meet our bills. We never did have much, I reckon. Dad wouldn't stand for takin' mavericks like some of the outfits do; so we don't get an even break. We always ate our own beef, too. Still, that's nothin' to brag about, I guess."

"Being honest is always something to brag about, Bill," said Mazie softly.

"But braggin' don't put money in the bank, Mazie," Bill got to his feet and picked up his hat.

"You're not going already, are you?" she asked.

"I reckon so, Mazie." He held out his hand to her. "I'll see yuh real soon."

Neilan was at the door, hat in hand, but made no move to go away with Bill, who walked back to his horse and led it around to the Tom-Tom hitch-rack. It was seldom

that Bill took a drink, but tonight he felt the need of companionship.

Enos Riggs and Clem Allard were at the bar, and Bill noticed that Enos had been drinking heavily. He leered at Bill, but did not speak. Near the back of the room Hashknife and Sleepy were playing a game of pool, while Lee Wells, Benny O'Neil and "Salt" Herring, one of the Seven R cowboys, perched on chairs and gave advice on certain shots. A five-handed poker game was in progress, while at another table four men argued over a black-jack game.

Bill Noon came back to the pool table, answering the greetings of those assembled. Enos Riggs was talking loudly at the bar, and it seemed that Clem Allard was trying to make him be quiet. Hashknife squinted toward the bar and noticed that Enos was looking toward Bill, as he said—

"She's got —— poor taste, I'd say."

Bill turned his head and looked back at Enos, who laughed and turned back to the bar. Hashknife shot a quick glance at Bill, wondering if Bill had heard, and if Enos was referring to Mazie's taste.

Hashknife missed his next shot and leaned back against the wall, keeping an eye on Enos, who had shoved away from the bar and started toward the back of the room, ignoring the whispered warning of Clem Allard, who was still sober enough to be cautious.

Enos came back behind Bill, who paid no attention, until he caught a warning from Hashknife's expression. Then he turned and faced the leering half-breed.

"Come back here, you —— fool!" whispered Clem Allard, who had come in behind Enos, taking him by the arm. But Enos jerked his arm away angrily.

"I do what I —— please!" he growled.

"Did you want somethin'?" asked Bill.

Enos rocked on the balls of his feet, his blood-shot eyes searching Bill's face.

"Somebody say she's yore girl." Enos shook his head. "I think she—"

"Shut up, you —— breed!" Bill's voice was a snapping whisper.

"—— breed, eh?" Enos' right hand moved back toward his gun, and the next instant Bill's left fist lashed out and hit Enos square on the chin. The blow did not travel far, but it had the kick of a mule in it, and Enos dropped to his knees, as if he had been shot. Then he sprawled forward on his face.

Hashknife stepped over, jerked the gun from Enos' holster and put it on top of the ball-rack. The incident caused a cessation in the gambling, all the players coming back to investigate.

"Aw, the —— fool got drunk and went huntin' for trouble," explained Allard. He drew Bill aside and told him that Enos had tried to give Neilan a white wolf pelt as a present to Mazie, and that Neilan had refused it.

"It made Enos sore," said Allard. "He's been nasty all evenin', and he had just enough whisky to make him think he could whip the world."

Enos was getting back to his feet now. The one punch had taken all the fight out of him, and he averted his eyes when Bill looked at him. Hashknife noticed that Enos felt for his gun, and his lips twisted in a snarling grin when he found it missing.

Bill stepped over to him and Enos backed toward the bar.

"I reckon you've had enough to make you keep still for a while," said Bill. "If I ever hear you mention another lady in this saloon, or any other saloon, you'll think what you just got was only a little remembrance."

Bill turned his back and sauntered toward the door. Hashknife had picked up his billiard cue and was balancing it in his right hand, as they watched Bill walk away from the half-breed.

SUDDENLY Enos reached down into the pocket of his sheepskin chaps, and whipped out a short-barreled Colt, flinging his hand waist-high.

"Turn around, —— yuh!" he barked at Bill.

But before Bill Noon could turn, Hashknife's right hand jerked back and he threw the heavy cue, javelin-like, and the big end of it thudded against the butt of Enos' left ear, dropping him in his tracks. And as he fell, the big gun went off, tearing a splinter out of the floor and thudding into the wall near the door.

"I'll betcha he stays down for a while this time!" exclaimed Sleepy, as they crowded around Enos. "Right on the angle of his jaw-bone, too. That's spearin' 'em, cowboy."

"What was the dirty pup goin' to do—shoot me in the back?" queried Bill.

"No—in the front," said Hashknife. "He was goin' to make a play for self-defense—make yuh draw—but his gun was out and the hammer was back. Look at it. It's single action, and he never had time to cock it after the cue hit him. Yuh can't say he wasn't ready for yuh, Bill."

"That's true," breathed Bill, as he held out his hand to Hashknife. "Thank yuh, Hartley."

"Don't mention it, Bill."

The bartender poured some water over Enos' head, and the half-breed got to his knees, still groggy, but recovering fast.

"He's sure got a hard head," declared Benny O'Neil.

Enos glared at Benny, but said nothing. Slowly he got to his feet, rubbing his ear.

"Now, you better go home," advised Hashknife. "I saved yuh from a rope, if yuh stop to think it over. Better leave both guns right where they are, until yuh get sober enough to keep 'em where they belong."

Enos did not reply, as he staggered out of the saloon, got on his horse at the hitch-rack and rode out of town. He had found out that being a bad man had its disadvantages.

"It's too —— bad somebody didn't kill him," complained Lee Wells. "He's a bad *hombre*."

"Give 'em time," laughed Sleepy. "But any time yuh want to shoot that half-breed, don't shoot at his head. When yuh can't dent 'em with a billiard cue, they're sure hard."

Bill stayed around for a few minutes, watching Hashknife and Sleepy complete their game, but went away before it was finished.

"That was sure a close call for Bill Noon," declared Benny O'Neil, as they went to the bar after the game. "Poor Bill wanted to invite everybody for a drink, but he didn't have money enough. I seen him lookin' at the money he had in his pocket. They're a busted lot at the Half-Circle N."

"How do yuh know?" asked Hashknife.

"Heard old Jack Noon talkin' to Al Cooper today, over at the store. Why, darn it, Hashknife, Noon ain't got money enough to pay up his winter grub bill, unless he sells off the twenty-odd cows he's got left."

"Good gosh, I never thought it was that bad!" snorted Hashknife.

"Well, it sure is," insisted Benny. "Somethin' has got to be done."

"There's a good reason to do somethin'," said Hashknife thoughtfully.

"But what can we do?" queried Sleepy.

"A feller," said Hashknife, squinting at his glass against the oil-lamp chandelier, "never knows, until he has to."

ENOS RIGGS went to work for Buck Rahl at the 7-A ranch. The fact that Enos had made a bad break against Bill Noon did not make any difference with Buck, who was bringing some cattle in from the Dry Lake country and needed extra men.

Neilan knew that Lee Wells was drinking more than was good for him, and warned Lee against it.

"I can't afford to have a drunken driver, Lee," explained Neilan. "You're a good driver, and if you want to keep this job, you better leave the liquor alone."

"Well, I'm kinda off it," said Lee. "You know how it is, when a bunch of fellers get together. But I never get so drunk I'm not able to drive."

It was rather difficult for Neilan to get a thoroughly reliable driver, as few men cared to jolt over the rough road from Broken Falls to Ghost Dance for fifty dollars a month. The spring thaw had softened the road, filling it with deep chuck-holes, which taxed the riding ability of a driver to stay on the seat, and guide the four horses required to haul the heavy old stage. It was only twenty miles, but with the roads in such bad condition it was only possible to make the round-trip in two days.

On account of the remaining snow in the mountains Rahl was obliged to bring his cattle down through the desert and into the valley past Broken Falls. It was a long drive, but he was able to buy cheap, because of the fact that there would be little summer feed in the desert country.

Hashknife and Sleepy were down near the Rahl ranch, when Rahl threw the new cattle on to the range, and they met Rahl, who was riding with Enos Riggs. Rahl stopped to chat with them, but Enos merely nodded and rode on.

"I wondered if he was sore at me," smiled Hashknife. "Yuh see, I busted him with a billiard cue, Rahl."

"I heard yuh did. Probably save him from gettin' hung, and he ought to be

grateful, but yuh never can tell about a breed. Anyway, he never has anything to say about it."

"Still water runs deep," quoted Sleepy.

"Oh, sure. How's everythin' on the Bar 44?"

"Inchin' along," replied Hashknife. "Feed is gettin' good, and yuh can see them cows swell up. How far north did yuh go in the Dry Lake country?"

"As far as Shack City. That town sure surprized me, Hartley. It must have a population of fifteen thousand. The mines are all workin' big shifts, and have been all winter. She's wide open. I had a hard time draggin' my boys out of there."

"About how far is it from here, Rahl?"

"You gettin' the fever, too?" Rahl laughed and shifted in his saddle. "Well, it's about eighty miles northwest of Ghost Dance, I reckon. It's a —— of a lot longer than that, the way we had to come."

"Many cows raised over there?"

"Not an awful lot. Feed's poor. You'd be surprized at the price I paid for what I got. I kinda cleaned out the Circle AVB outfit. They're about ten miles from Shack City. The rest of the ranches are further south."

"The Circle AVB is the outfit Lee Wells worked for all winter," said Sleepy.

"Yeah, I think it is," agreed Rahl. "This is the first year I haven't wintered much stock, but it won't be the last. Any old time I can pick 'em up at that price in the desert, it won't pay me to winter a herd in here."

Rahl rode on toward the ranch, while Hashknife and Sleepy headed back toward Ghost Dance. They noticed some of the desert cattle, strung along through the swales, gaunted from the long drive. There were Triangle Cross, KCS and Circle AVB bands, about the same number of each.

"I think Rahl has the right system," said Hashknife. "He sits tight through the winter, buys cheap in the spring."

"That's all right," said Sleepy. "But where do the desert ranchers get off? If they sell out in the spring, where in —— do they stock up in the fall?"

They rode along across the green hills, heading into a breeze which smelled of wet earth, the unmistakable odor of springtime, their horses going fetlock deep in soft earth.

"Sleepy," said Hashknife, after a long period of silence, "I've always wondered if you'd ever use yore head for anythin' except a hat-hanger."

"Well, have I?" asked Sleepy innocently.

"Yuh sure have, cowboy."

They cut in on the road about a mile below Ghost Dance, just ahead of the stage, which came jerking along, with Lee Wells yanking from side to side in his seat, singing at the top of his voice:

"Git along, my little dogie,
Git along, my little dearie;
I'm headin' for Montan-e-e-e,
I'm headin' down the trail;
I'm bound for Montan-e-e-e,
With a steer by the ta-a-ail."

They rode to Ghost Dance just ahead of him, tied their horses in front of Cooper's store and watched Lee swing the four horses to a stop at the stage office. While he was not what might be termed drunk, he was fairly well filled with liquor. Frank Neilan came out and helped him unload the stage, and the two cowboys noticed that Neilan talked confidentially with Lee, before Lee took the team to the stable.

"Neilan is probably layin' down the law to Wells," decided Hashknife.

This was proven later when Lee came to the Tom-Tom saloon and insisted that Hashknife and Sleepy join him in a drink.

"Neilan jist gave me old Billy ——," he told them. "By ——, I'd like to have a chart that'd show me jist how much a man can drink and still not be drunk. I had a quart when I left Broken Falls, and there's at least one or two drinks left in it. Neilan's got the wrong idea, I tell yuh. I can drink two quarts and drive sixteen horses plumb through a picket-fence and never rip off a splinter."

"I'll bet yuh can, too," agreed Hashknife. "Yo're some driver, they tell me, Wells."

"Best —— driver yuh ever seen," proudly and seriously.

"And a good rider, too, eh?"

Lee Wells straightened up, leaning his huge bulk against the bar, and fixing Hashknife with his blood-shot eyes.

"The best yuh ever seen," he declared. "I can ride anythin' yuh can hook a hull on to."

"That's what Buck Rahl was sayin'," said Hashknife, intent on rolling a cigaret. "Buck just got back with a bunch of cows from the Dry Lake country."

"He did, eh?" Lee rubbed his nose thoughtfully. "Mm-m-m-ha."

"Went as far as Shack City," said Hashknife. "He tells me it's quite a place, Lee."

"Yeah, it is. Growin' real fast."

"He brought over quite a bunch of Circle AVB cattle."

"Thasso. I worked there last winter. Old Al Benson owns it. I wouldn't give a —— for the whole country, if I had to live there in the summer."

"We was thinkin' of goin' over there," said Hashknife.

"Not in the summer," Lee shook his head violently. "It's about a hundred and twenty in the shade, and no shade. In the winter it's jist comfortable."

Several more cowboys came clattering in, fell upon Wells in a body, and wanted to hock him to the bartender for a drink. In the confusion Hashknife and Sleepy left the place and went to the store, where they found old Jack Noon in conversation with Al Cooper.

THEY halted near the front of the store to admire a hair bridle, which article both of them detested, but it gave them an alibi not to listen to the conversation. Cooper was talking and they could not help hearing what he said.

"Jack, I'm not squeezin' you. You just let it run until you can pay it."

"How in —— can I ever expect to pay it?" demanded the old man. "I'll bring in enough cows to pay the bill, Al. I can't borrow a cent at the bank. I've got about twenty head of stock left, and when that's gone—"

"You keep your cows, Jack. That's final. And your credit is just as good as ever."

"That's mighty fine of yuh, Al—mighty fine. But you've got to live."

That ended the conversation. Cooper probably realized that Hashknife and Sleepy were trying not to hear. Old Jack Noon came past them, forcing a smile.

"How's Aunt Jimmy?" asked Hashknife.

"Jist fine," replied the old man. "Fact of the matter is—if she was any better she'd have to be tied."

"The grass is comin' pretty fine right now," said Sleepy.

"Yeah, it sure is," the old man squared his shoulders. "This spring smell sure makes me feel young again. When I see the new grass comin' and the trees beginnin' to bud, and the water comin' down from the hills, I jist think that God A'mighty is doin' it to prove to us that everythin' is workin' out fine.

"And sometimes I wonder if He don't hand us a winter like the last one, to kinda test our faith. It shore made me feel like the colored man who was lost in a big thunder-storm. He was tryin' to find his way along in the dark, and when the lightnin' would come he'd git his bearin's, but as soon as the crash of thunder would come it would scare him stiff.

"After a while he got down on his knees and prayed to the Lord to give him mo' light and less noise. I shore did do some prayin' last winter, but Ghost Dance Valley is such a small place, when yuh stop and think about how big the rest of the world is around us, and it was so doggone cold that a prayer would freeze before it went twenty feet."

The old man laughed and slapped himself on the knee.

"Well, I've got to be headin' for home. Why don't you boys come over once in a while? Mighty glad to have yuh. Aunt Jimmy was sayin' the other day that when it was below zero yuh used to show up once in a while, but since it got warm we never see yuh."

"We'll come over soon," promised Hashknife. "We've been kinda busy lately, fixin' fences and proppin' up sheds that the snow busted down."

The old man went out, and Cooper joined them.

"I feel awful sorry for Jack Noon," he told them. "He owes me quite a bill, and they're practically broke. I've tried to tell him I'll carry him until he gets on his feet again, but he won't take it. Finest folks on earth—the Noon family."

"They sure are fine folks," agreed Hashknife heartily. "I'd give my last shirt to 'em, Cooper."

They walked to the rear of the room, and Hashknife purchased a box of cartridges for his rifle.

"The coyotes are gettin' too numerous around the Bar 44," he said. "And there's nothin' that'll discourage familiarity in a coyote quicker than a well placed .30-.30 bullet."

"It does cure their curiosity," laughed Cooper, handing Hashknife his change.

"Did you see the white wolf pelt I bought from Enos Riggs?"

He brought it from the back room and spread it on the counter. It had been taken from an extra large animal, almost snow-white, a big, fluffy, beautiful pelt.

"I suppose that's the hide he wanted to give to Neilan's daughter, ain't it?" asked Sleepy. Cooper nodded.

"Do you know where that half-breed traps?" asked Hashknife.

"Back on Frying-Pan Creek—the creek that comes in just below here. He's back toward the main divide, but I understand his cabin is on the creek, about fifteen miles from here. His catch wasn't as big last winter as it was the winter before."

"Back in the timber, I suppose."

"I think so. I've never been back there."

They went back to their horses and headed for the Bar 44. Sleepy noticed that Hashknife was very thoughtful; so much so that he put the burning end of a cigaret in his mouth.

He spat it out quickly and failed to pay any attention to the incident, except to brush his hand across his lips. Sleepy had been with Hashknife long enough to know that the tall, solemn-faced cowpuncher had something on his mind.

That it had to do with the disappearance of the Ghost Dance cattle, Sleepy was sure. He could read the symptoms of an investigation in Hashknife's rapt expression. And Sleepy had gone through enough of these investigations to follow Hashknife blindly.

With a different disposition, Hashknife Hartley might have been a famous detective, making much money thereby. But he was not content to stay in one place. The lure of the dim trails drew him on, aided and abetted by the bow-legged Sleepy, whose mind analyzed nothing, but whose gun was always ready at the critical time.

Neither of them was an expert gunman, but practical experience had taught them certain things about the psychology of gun fighting, which gave them a certain edge. Coolness, possibly more than any other factor, had enabled them to come out of the powder smoke intact, while faster gunmen had gone down.

They asked no reward. They bore no hatred toward criminals. It was just a game to them, in which their reward was in bringing happiness to some one who deserved it. They had spent more time in Ghost Dance Valley than they had in any other place, and they were ready to move on; but the lure of the game was upon Hashknife once more; the chance to match wits with the men who had broken old Jack Noon.

"What have yuh been thinkin' about?" asked Sleepy, as they drew up at the Bar 44 gate.

"Thinkin' about makin' Ghost Dance Valley safe for next winter," grinned Hashknife.

"Can yuh do it?" asked Sleepy eagerly.

"I hope so, cowboy. Do yuh know what restitution means?"

"Yeah, I don't know," said Sleepy innocently. "Do you?"

"I think so," grinned Hashknife. "Go on and open the gate."

"Has it got any powder smoke in it?" asked Sleepy, as he pulled the pin and let the big gate sag open.

"Not in any dictionary I ever seen, Sleepy—but Webster didn't know it all."

THE next day Bill Noon rode out to the Bar 44 and struck Hashknife for a job. Hashknife would have hired Bill, if there was a vacancy, but the Bar 44 was full-handed. In fact, there was not enough work for the crew of four men.

"I tried to get on with Buck Rahl and with Le Saint," said Bill. "But they're full-handed. I dunno what to do, unless I go over in the desert and strike for a job."

"Not much chance over there this time of year," said Hashknife.

"Well, I've got to get a job," declared Bill. "I reckon you know what we're up against. I was to draw fifty a month from Dad—but the winter broke us, Hartley. It isn't his fault. Our five hundred head of cattle are gone."

Bill rode back to town and met Mazie on the street. Her father had gone to Broken Falls on the stage and would not be home until the following day. They walked together up to the gate, while Bill told her of his unsuccessful attempts at getting a job.

"I think I'll strike yore dad for the stage job," he told her. "I've got to make some money, Mazie. I don't get a cent for my winter work. You know how things broke for Dad."

"Oh, I'm sorry, Bill."

"You know what it meant for me, Mazie —for us—you know."

"But it can't be helped, Bill. Perhaps Dad can use you. He went to Broken Falls with Lee Wells, because he felt that Lee might get drunk again. I think Dad would be awful glad to have you drive for him. Sometimes there's some valuable packages to bring to Ghost Dance, and a drunken driver isn't to be trusted."

Bill nodded slowly.

"I suppose the stage carries quite a lot of money at times, Mazie."

"I suppose it does. Anyway, I hope Dad gives you the job, Bill."

"I sure could use it," grinned Bill. "I need money pretty bad right now, little woman."

"Don't worry about that. Have you seen Enos Riggs lately?"

"I saw him out at the 7R, when I struck Rahl for a job. He got cured of being a bad man, I reckon. Hashknife Hartley saved my life that night. He thinks fast."

"And he's so tall and so solemn," smiled Mazie. "One would almost expect him to preach."

"I'll bet he could," said Bill seriously. "Mark Griswold says Hartley is the best cow-hand he ever seen. But he's not as serious as he looks. He's laughing behind his solemn face all the time."

After a few minutes more of conversation Bill went back to the main street. Enos Riggs and "Tin-Ear" Thompson, a slat-like cowboy, also from the 7R, had just ridden in. Thompson waved at Bill, but the half-breed did not look toward him. They tied their horses and went in the Tom-Tom Saloon.

Bill went to Cooper's store, and in a few minutes Bob Erway, the sheriff, tied his horse in front of the store and came in.

He shook hands with Cooper and Bill, bought some tobacco and sat down to enjoy a smoke. The sheriff was always serious. The cares of his official position sat heavily upon him, and he had evidently worried a lot over the missing cattle.

Tin-Ear Thompson came in, bought a package of tobacco and sat on the counter, his long legs dangling, as he rolled a cigaret.

The sheriff watched him thoughtfully, then asked: "Did you fellers get yore cattle through all right?"

"Shore," nodded Thompson. "Never lost one. It was a —— of a drag down through the desert."

"I reckon Buck Rahl had the right idea," nodded the sheriff thoughtfully.

"He did," said Thompson quickly.

"Well, I wish we knew where our cattle went," said Bill Noon.

"Well, I do, too," declared the sheriff. "It's a mystery, Bill. It sure has got me stumped, but I'm still hopin' to get on the right track."

"I hope you do," Cooper leaned across the counter beside Thompson. "It would be worth a lot to Ghost Dance. Not that it will ever bring back the cattle, but it'll stop 'em from doin' the same thing over again."

"I'm goin' out to the Bar 44," said the sheriff. "The Hartley person—" The sheriff hesitated and scratched a match against the rusty stove.

"What's he got to do with it?" asked Thompson.

"Not a thing, except that—well, I reckon I won't say anything more about it."

"You mean to say he might know somethin'?" asked Bill eagerly.

"Anybody might," smiled the sheriff. "Hartley's no fool."

The sheriff threw away his cigaret and went out. Thompson went back to the Tom-Tom Saloon and joined the group at the bar.

"Where's the sheriff headin' for?" asked Miles O'Dowd, a chunky little cowboy from the Mission Cross L. It was always of interest to know where the sheriff might be going. O'Dowd had seen the sheriff ride away.

"Said he was goin' out to the Bar 44," said Thompson, accepting an invitation to drink.

"What for?" queried Enos Riggs.

"Aw, I don't know," replied Thompson indifferently. "He's ridin' sign on rustlers, I reckon. Said he was goin' out to see Hartley," Thompson grinned and tossed down his drink. "Mebbe Hartley is a cow-detective."

"I'll betcha he ain't," said O'Dowd.

"I ain't no bettin' man, Miles. All I know is what the sheriff didn't say. He mentioned Hartley, and then shut up. Just the same, he's goin' out there, and I hope he can put the deadwood on the rustlers. Now, I'll buy a drink."

ENOS rubbed his left ear and scowled at the back-bar mirror. There was still a lump where the butt end of that billiard cue had hit him, and he did not entertain any friendly feeling for the man who had hit him. He had come back the following day and collected his two guns from the bartender.

Miles O'Dowd grinned at the reflection of Enos' face in the mirror. He had seen Hashknife hurl the billiard cue.

"He may not be a detective, but he's a —— good shot with a billiard cue," laughed O'Dowd.

"Yes—good shot," muttered Enos. "Next time, mebbe not so —— good."

"Then you better catch him when he ain't lookin'," laughed Thompson.

"And that's a swell chance," declared O'Dowd. "That long-geared whippoorwill is always lookin'. I'll betcha he sees the grass grow."

"And hears it, too," added Thompson. "If he can land the men who stole all them cows, Ghost Dance will nominate him for President next election."

"And elect him, too," declared the bartender, who was drinking every time any one else did.

It had begun to rain; a slow drizzle, with the low-hanging clouds which presaged an all-night storm. Thompson went out and looked it over.

"It kinda looks like a sticker," he told Enos. "We better stay here tonight. I'll be —— if I want to ride back in the rain."

"A good rain will sure put the Broken Falls road in good condition," said one of the men. "I don't envy Lee Wells."

"Frank Neilan went with him this mornin'," offered the bartender. "Maybe he was afraid Lee might get drunk again."

"It's a cinch bet that he will," laughed O'Dowd. "Some day he'll fall off and break his fool neck. I'm goin' to find me some food."

They left the saloon and headed through the rain to a Chinese restaurant, except Enos, who said he wasn't hungry. He took another drink and went out. It was dark, and the rain hissed down on the wet sidewalk. Enos went slowly down the street, his collar turned up around his neck, sombrero pulled low over his face.

There was no one in sight. The saddle-horses huddled together at the hitch-rack, their rumps turned toward the storm. Enos did not stagger much, and for several moments he stood against the corner of a building beside a narrow alley.

Finally he stepped into the alley, making his way cautiously around some other small buildings, until he reached the two-plank sidewalk which led to Neilan's house. He could see a light in the house, and for a long space of time he stood near the gate, studying the house. He had never been there before.

He fumbled at the gate-latch, walked in and went swiftly up the gravel walk to the front door. Through a front window he could see Maizie in the kitchen, and his nose detected the odors of cooking food.

There was no light in the living-room. Cautiously he tested the front door and found it unlocked. It was an uncommon thing for any one to lock a door in Ghost Dance. Swiftly he stepped in and closed the door behind him. But as cautious as he was, the wind and rain, whipping in with him, betrayed the fact that some one had entered the house.

Mazie did not move from beside the stove. Enos could not see her from where he stood against the wall, but he could hear her stirring something in a pan. He grinned at his own cleverness. Whisky had made him all Indian, and he did not count the cost of his foolishness. The fact that Neilan was out of town made it perfectly safe for him to visit Mazie—according to his own views on the matter.

Slowly he moved across the living-room floor until he stood in the doorway to the kitchen. Mazie turned her head and looked at him. Her face was a trifle pale, and her smile was a grimace of horror, but Enos was no mind-reader.

"Hello, Enos," she said huskily. "You are just in time for supper."

"For supper, eh?" he grinned widely.

This was better than he had expected. Mazie could smell the liquor on him. His long, lean hands were all wet and the mud was caking off his boots on her carpet.

"Won't you sit down?" she asked, indicating a chair.

"Huh!" Enos grunted and looked behind him.

He had not expected such a welcome, and he was just crafty enough to suspect that there might be a catch to it all.

He picked up the chair and placed it in the doorway.

"It's awfully wet, isn't it?" she said.

"Pretty —— wet," he nodded.

Mazie went on with her cooking, her mind in a whirl. How to get rid of this drunken half-breed? She thought of and discarded every scheme she could think of. There wasn't a possibility in the world of any one's coming. And with the heavy downpour of rain, it was practically a certainty that no one would hear her, even if she called for help.

Enos knew this, too. He slumped in his chair, following her movements with his eyes, as he rolled a cigaret.

"I want to give you white wolfskin," he told her thickly.

"I know it, Enos." Mazie took some dishes from the cupboard and began setting the table.

"Your old man —— fool. He won't take wolfskin for you."

"I know he wouldn't, Enos. Perhaps he was afraid you were robbing yourself. A white wolf is worth money."

"Not much. I sell for ten dollars. Somebody say you goin' to marry Bill Noon."

"I don't know," said Mazie nervously.

"You don't know, eh?" Enos laughed harshly. "Everybody else know."

Mazie paused in her work, as if listening. A sudden idea had occurred to her. Enos lifted his head, watching her closely. She turned back to her work. Enos continued to listen, but there was only the steady patter of the rain on the shingles.

It was warm in the kitchen and Enos had difficulty in keeping his eyes open. He noticed that the girl was looking sharply at him; so he straightened up and began rolling another cigaret.

"You don't know I come tonight, eh?" he said.

"Oh, yes, I was expecting you, Enos." Mazie forced a smile, and the half-breed squinted closely at her.

This was something he did not understand.

"How you know?" He got to his feet, staring at her.

"I didn't know," she said slowly, "but I thought you might."

"Huh!" Enos shifted his feet uneasily. This was not so good, he thought. If she was expecting him, it might not be so good. His eyes squinted toward the table, where places had been laid for five people. Slowly he counted them. He reached back and lifted the chair out of the doorway.

"You feed five people tonight?" he growled. "Who come?"

Mazie looked squarely at him.

"They should be here now—Bill Noon, Hashknife Hartley and Sleepy Stevens. I thought I heard them a moment ago."

Enos whirled on his heel, drawing the gun from his holster, and ran back through the living-room. Swiftly he flung open the door, and dashed blindly toward the gate, while Mazie ran in behind him, locking the door. Then she ran to the kitchen and bolted the door, after which she dropped into a chair, holding her head in her hands; laughing hysterically, while on the stove sizzled one egg, two strips of bacon and a tiny pan of potatoes. Hardly enough to feed four guests. But the psychology of the five places at the table was all she needed to drive the half-breed out into the storm, thankful to get away with a whole skin.

BOB ERWAY, the sheriff, stayed all night at the Bar 44. He and Hashknife talked far into the night about the cattle stealing, and Hashknife learned many things about the topography of the Ghost Dance country. Hashknife liked the serious-minded little sheriff, who was so anxious to clear up the mystery.

Erway had been all through the Dry Lake country and knew many of the cattlemen. He had been in Shack City and knew all about the gold discovery. He drew maps of the Dry Lake region, showing where the different cattle outfits were located, and by the time they went to bed, Hashknife had all these points fixed in his mind.

The following morning he and Sleepy rode to Ghost Dance with the sheriff and Mark Griswold. Mazie Neilan had not told any one about Enos Riggs' visit, because she knew what would happen to Enos, and she wasn't sure that he had really intended harming her. She knew the temper of the men in the cattle country, and that Enos' life wouldn't be worth a thin dime if they knew he had entered her house uninvited.

It was still raining a little, and the main street of Ghost Dance was a quagmire, where horses sank to their fetlocks. The four men from the Bar 44 went to the Tom-Tom. Thompson was still there. He had seen nothing of Enos Riggs since the evening before, and decided that the half-breed

had gotten sore over Miles O'Dowd's remarks and gone back to the ranch.

The boys from the Mission Cross L had gone home later that night, but Thompson declared he was no muskrat, and had spent the night in town. Several of the men had started a poker game in the saloon, and Mark Griswold and the sheriff joined them.

Hashknife and Sleepy decided in favor of a game of pool, and knocked the balls around the table until dinner time. In the cattle country they had dinner at noon. The stage from Broken Falls usually arrived at noon, but the wet roads would make it much later today.

It was about two o'clock when a rider came down the muddy street, and stopped in a shower of mud, some of which squirted in through the door of the saloon. It was Miles O'Dowd, his face plastered with mud, and panting as if he had been doing the running instead of the horse.

He stomped into the saloon, whipping the water off his hat against his chaps, and leaving a puddle wherever he stepped. The bartender roared at him for trying to shove all the mud out of the street into the saloon.

"Oh, to —— with yore saloon!" panted O'Dowd.

He strode over to the poker table and spoke directly to the sheriff:

"Get yore horse and come with me, Erway. There's —— to pay down the road!"

The sheriff shoved back his chair, as did the rest of the players. Hashknife and Sleepy dropped their cues and came up to the poker table.

"It's down at Fryin' Pan Crossin'," panted O'Dowd. "Le Saint is down there, takin' care of everythin'. Frank Neilan is as dead as a door-knob and Bill Noon is shot full of holes."

"For ——'s sake, how did that happen?" exploded the sheriff.

"Not knowin', I can't say," panted O'Dowd. "Let's go!"

The poker players left their money on the table and ran for their horses. Hashknife forgot his hat, until the downpour of rain apprised him of the fact. But he did not stop to get it. They rode out of Ghost Dance, each rider fighting for the lead, heading for the crossing of Frying Pan Creek, about a mile below town.

FRYING PAN was ordinarily a small creek, but now it had swollen to the proportions of a small river. The four horses had twisted almost off the road and were standing with their heads down, partly obscured by the jack-pines. The rear wheels of the stage were still in the water.

Le Saint met them just before they got to the stage. He was in his shirt sleeves, drenched and muddy. Lying in the middle of the road, just ahead of the stage, was Bill Noon, his head and shoulders covered with Le Saint's coat.

Lying, half on the stage seat and half over the dash, was Frank Neilan, his head pillowed on one arm. The riders dismounted and gathered around the stage.

"I haven't touched anythin', except to cover Bill Noon," said Le Saint. "We've got to get Bill to a doctor as soon as possible. Poor Frank Neilan don't need one."

Hashknife had climbed over a front wheel of the stage, and was trying to examine Neilan, who was quite dead. He dropped down and opened the door of the stage, while the others crowded in behind him.

Lying on the floor of the stage, his head and shoulders braced against the rear seat, was Lee Wells, dead drunk, a quart bottle of whisky clutched in one hand. It was half empty.

"I seen him before," said Le Saint.

Wells was snoring heavily. They shut the door and went back to Bill Noon. He was unconscious, shot twice. One bullet had struck him in the left shoulder, while the other had ripped along the side of his head.

His six-shooter was lying in the mud near his right hand, and the sheriff's examination showed that it had been fired twice. The men picked him up and carried him back to the stage, where they placed him on the seat.

"We better put Neilan inside, too," said the sheriff. "What do you make of it, Hartley?"

Hashknife stepped aside, shaking his head. He hated to say what he really did think. As they lowered Neilan's body, Hashknife turned and studied the ford. A fringe of bushes were partly submerged near the bank, and hanging to one of the whipping branches was what appeared to be a dirty rag.

Hashknife stepped out in the dirty water

and removed it from the branch, unobserved by any of the men, who were busy. Hashknife sniffed at the soiled piece of linen, which proved to be a cheap handkerchief, with a faded blue border. He squeezed out the water and put the handkerchief in his pocket.

Le Saint climbed on the seat of the stage, and they went back over the muddy road to town. No one had offered a reason for the tragedy, although it was in the minds of most that Bill Noon had tried to hold up the stage. Neilan's gun had been fired three times. They drove the stage down to the doctor's home, where they unloaded the unconscious Bill Noon, and also turned the body of Neilan over to the doctor, who was also the undertaker.

They unloaded Lee Wells at the Tom-Tom Saloon. He was still too drunk to know what it was all about. In carrying him into the saloon his revolver fell from its holster and Hashknife picked it up. It was fully loaded, clean of barrel, a well kept .45 Colt.

An investigation showed that the strongbox was intact, and in it were two packages for the Ghost Dance Bank, containing three thousand each in currency. Le Saint and the sheriff were delegated to carry the bad news to Mazie Neilan, while Hashknife and Sleepy rode out to tell the Noon family.

A brief examination by the doctor had disclosed the information that Bill had a fighting chance. Old Jack Noon listened to the tale in a dazed sort of a way, while Aunt Jimmy clung to his arm, blinking painfully, too shocked to realize what it was all about.

"But why?" wailed the old man. "My ——, Hashknife, why did it happen?"

"I don't know," confessed Hashknife. "I honestly don't. It hit us all awful hard."

"Did Bill—did he shoot?" asked the old man nervously.

"Twice," said Hashknife.

"My ——!"

"Oh, let's not talk about it," choked Aunt Jimmy. "We must go to town as soon as we can get there."

Hashknife and Sleepy hitched up their buggy horses, and helped them get ready for the trip. It was still raining when they drove away. They did not say good-by to the two cowboys. Just got in the buggy and drove away, slopping along through the rain, peering ahead through the mist.

Hashknife and Sleepy stood on the Half-Circle N ranch-house porch and watched them drive away. Hashknife shoved his hands down in his pockets and shook his head sadly.

"I dunno why folks like them always get the hard knocks," he said slowly. "This will just about kill 'em, Sleepy."

"Money!" snorted Sleepy disgustedly. "Bill needed money. And there was six thousand dollars on that stage."

Hashknife sighed deeply.

"There was. Oh, this is goin' to be awful tough on that poor girl. Bill was her sweetheart—is her sweetheart."

"Yeah, that's true. Ah, ——, he never expected to find Neilan drivin' that stage, Hashknife. He looked for Lee Wells."

"Killin' Lee Wells would be murder just the same, Sleepy."

"Aw, I know that. But Bill wouldn't have tried it, if he knew Neilan was drivin'. Lee probably got too drunk to drive. I wonder if Bill knew that money was comin' in today?"

"I don't know, Sleepy; we'll have to find out. Let's cut across the hills to the ranch, eh? I don't want to go back to Ghost Dance until folks cool down—and I want to do just a little thinkin'."

They mounted and rode across the rain-swept hills, almost as dark as night from the low-hanging clouds, while down the road toward town toiled two mud-spattered horses, dragging a muddy buggy, in which sat two white-faced people, silent, looking ahead into the gloom that was not all caused by the rain.

THE sheriff rode to Broken Falls that night, gathering all the information possible. He found that Lee Wells had been drinking heavily; so heavily, in fact, that he was unable to climb to the driver's seat. Neilan had bundled him into the stage and had taken the reins himself.

A livery-stable man told the sheriff that Lee Wells had a full quart of whisky with him when the stage pulled out. He knew this, because he had uncorked the bottle for Lee himself. There was little more information to be derived from that end of the line; so he rode back to Ghost Dance after breakfast.

Lee Wells had slept himself sober, knowing nothing about the tragedy.

"Why, ——, it ain't possible!" he exclaimed. "I wasn't so drunk I wouldn't know anythin' about it."

"You sure was," declared Miles O'Dowd. "You was so full of liquor that you didn't know anythin'."

Lee shook his head wonderingly and swore he'd drink no more.

"It jist about killed that girl of Neilan's," said Miles. "All the wimmin in the town are still over there, tryin' to take care of her. Le Saint said it was the last time he'd ever pack that kind of news to anybody. I guess it shore was a wallop."

The sheriff rode in and found that Bill Noon was still unconscious. Old Jack Noon and Aunt Jimmy were with him. The news had spread to the other ranches, and many of the cowboys rode in to get the latest news. Enos Riggs came from the 7R, but he was careful to keep away from Hashknife and Sleepy. The night before he watched for a long time to see if Hashknife, Sleepy and Bill Noon went to the Neilan home, but saw nothing of them.

Hashknife and the sheriff talked it over, and the sheriff told Hashknife what he had found out in Broken Falls.

"That don't give us much to work on," complained the sheriff. "It looks awful bad for Bill Noon, even if he recovers."

"It does," agreed Hashknife. "But it don't fit in with what I think of Bill Noon. Why, dang it, Bill was goin' to marry Neilan's daughter."

"I know it, Hartley. But Noon needed money. They're broke. Bill is a hot-blooded sort of a young man, and it might possibly be that he knew some money was comin' in on that stage. It ain't likely that he expected to meet Neilan, got himself into a jamb and had to shoot. Neilan would shoot, and he shot straight."

"He shot three times," said Hashknife. "Noon shot twice. And both of them were hit twice. I'd say that both of 'em were pretty fair shots. If Bill Noon recovers, any jury in the world would hang him."

"They shore would. Mebbe it would be better for Bill and all concerned, if he didn't get well. The old man and the old lady just sit down there, holdin' their hands. But I think they understand what it means. I like them folks, Hartley, and it hurts me a lot. I reported it to the prosecutin' attorney, and he says he'll charge Noon with murder as soon as Noon is able to realize what it all means."

Hashknife squinted thoughtfully, rubbing the back of his hand across his long nose.

"And you'd have to hang him, Erway."

"I would, like ——!" The little sheriff bristled indignantly. "I'd quit the job first. I might kill a man in performance of my duty, but I'll be —— if I'll be a party to any legal murder. Tie their hands and drop 'em on a rope? If that ain't premeditated murder, what in —— is?"

"I reckon yo're right," agreed Haskhife. "It sure don't give the victim much of a fightin' chance. And it don't teach anybody a lesson. A public hangin' might be a warnin', but a private one only affects the victim and a few chosen mortals.

"The victim don't profit by it, that's a cinch, and those few well chosen mortals are usually of such high mental caliber that they ain't goin' to murder anybody, anyway."

"Not openly," said the sheriff seriously. "Let's walk down to the doctor's place and see how Bill is gettin' along."

They found the old folks all excited. Bill had regained consciousness for a few minutes, recognized them, seemed to know nothing of what had happened at the hold-up, and had lapsed into unconsciousness again. The doctor was indignant, but said nothing to the old folks.

"They fairly yelled questions at him," he told Hashknife and the sheriff. "The boy has been badly hurt, and that bullet across his head would possibly prevent him from remembering anything."

"How about that other bullet?" asked Hashknife.

"I've got it. The bullet went through without striking a bone, and I found it just beneath the skin on his back."

He opened a drawer of a cabinet and took out the bullet, which he handed to Hashknife. It was hardly battered at all, as it had not struck any bones. Hashknife squinted at it closely and gave it to the sheriff, who returned it to the doctor, with the remark that Bill might want it for a souvenir, in case he got out of it all right.

The doctor had prepared Neilan for burial, which was to take place the following day. His belt and gun were on top of the cabinet where the doctor had kept the bullet, and out of curiosity Hashknife took them down.

THE gun still contained the three empty shells, along with three loaded ones. Hashknife examined them. It was a double-action Colt .45, fairly new, a real he-man's gun, except for the fact that single-action guns were more popular in the range country.

Aunt Jimmy was outside the house when they came out, and Hashknife stopped to talk with her. She had picked some of the doctor's potted geraniums, which he had nursed in the house through the winter, and had now placed in the sun beside the house.

"I wanted 'em for Billy," she told Hashknife.

Aunt Jimmy had aged years in a few hours. Hashknife patted her on the back and nodded his head.

"But he's goin' to get well," she said hopefully.

"Sure thing," agreed Hashknife. "Everythin' is goin' to be fine, Aunt Jimmy."

"Not fine," she said wearily. "Oh, I know what they're sayin'. They say that Billy tried to rob that stage. I know my boy better than the rest of the world does, and I know he's no thief."

"That's the right spirit," applauded Hashknife. "They can't make me believe it, either. It's a awful mess, y'betcha. Have yuh seen Mazie Neilan?"

Aunt Jimmy nodded slowly, her lips quivering.

"Yes," she said slowly. "She came in and looked at Billy, but she didn't say anythin'. But I feel that she don't believe what they're sayin'. If she did, she wouldn't come and look at him, do you think?"

"I hope she wouldn't, Aunt Jimmy. Now you and Jack Noon keep a stiff lip. It's sure awful foggy right now, but it never stays foggy always. The sun is bound to break through sooner or later. Just keep on knowin' that he's innocent."

Hashknife went back to the Tom-Tom Saloon, where he found Lee Wells and several cowboys. Lee was not drinking, and the top pockets of his vest were crammed full of cigars. He nodded to Hashknife and tried to get him to accept a handful of the cigars, but Hashknife refused.

"I don't blame yuh," laughed Lee. "But I had to take somethin'. I filled up on sody water, to begin with. Ha, ha, ha, ha! I'm off liquor for a while. Geemighty, after what happened in my immediate vicinity, I've got a right to swear off."

He left the boys at the bar and sat down against the wall with Hashknife. He asked about Bill Noon, and Hashknife told him about Bill's short period of consciousness.

"I sure must 'a' been drunk," said Wells. "And I didn't have no idea of gettin' drunk when I went to Broken Falls. Neilan went down there with me, and he sure gave me —— about drinkin'. I asked him if that's what he went with me for, and he just the same as said that he didn't trust me.

"It made me pretty mad, but I didn't say much. I intended to tell him to go to —— with his old stage and to pay me what he owed me. But I got drunk and forgot to resign. Ha, ha, ha, ha! I remember somethin' about the depot agent refusin' to give me some valuable packages. I went back to the stage office and told Neilan.

"He said that the man was right. I forgot to hitch up my team, I guess. Anyway, I seen it standin' in front of the office; so I got me a bottle and went over there. I remember seein' one of the boys from the livery-stable, and he helped me uncork the bottle. I reckon I took another drink, and that's about all I remember until I woke up here at Ghost Dance."

"Well, I don't blame yuh for swearin' off," grinned Hashknife.

Sleepy came in and Hashknife joined him. Sleepy wanted to play a game of pool, but Hashknife refused. He led Sleepy out of the saloon and around to their horses.

"Where are we goin'?" asked Sleepy.

"We're goin' to ride down to the Fryin' Pan Crossin'."

"O-o-o-oh, yeah. You ain't expectin' anythin' to happen there today, are yuh?"

"Yuh never can tell, cowboy; it did yesterday."

They mounted and rode down to the scene of the tragedy. Hashknife halted just before reaching the ford, and considered the road ahead of him. They had just come around a curve, and it was all straight road ahead of them to where the creek ran its muddy way toward the river.

It was about two hundred yards from where they stopped to the crossing, and this fact seemed of interest to Hashknife, who smoked a cigaret thoughtfully, while Sleepy

lolled in his saddle, blissfully indifferent to anything.

Finally they rode on, stopping at the bank of the stream, where Hashknife dismounted and searched both sides of the road.

"Lookin' for clues?" asked Sleepy.

"No-o-o-o, I'm just feelin' of the weeds. I'm so smart that I can feel of weeds and tell lotsa things."

"A reg'lar weed-feeler, eh?"

Hashknife ignored Sleepy's gibes, but finally gave up his search, after going over both sides of the road. He even shoved his way into the brush, examining the ground thoroughly. But he found nothing, nor did he tell Sleepy what he was looking for.

Sleepy grinned blankly and whistled through his teeth. He knew there was no use in asking Hashknife questions. In all the cases of range-land mysteries which Hashknife had solved, not once had he given Sleepy the slightest idea of his suspicions, until he had connected all the links.

THEY rode back to Ghost Dance and Hashknife led the way up to Neilan's home. There were several of Mazie's neighbors with her; long-faced types, who dote on mystery, helping her prepare for the funeral, which was to be held on the morrow.

She shook hands with Hashknife and Sleepy, who led her away from the congregation on the porch.

"We wanted to come up before this," said Hashknife, "but we knew there would be so many folks around—to make yuh feel bad."

Mazie glanced quickly at him and a ghost of a smile flitted across her face.

"They mean well," she said softly. "But oh, I've heard it all threshed over so many times; so many other tales of—of things like this; everything from lancing a felon to doctoring a sick horse."

"Good girl!" applauded Hashknife softly. "It's sure a good thing you didn't forget how to see the humor of things. It's a tough situation. And after all you've heard, do you think Bill Noon is guilty?"

Her eyes were filled with pain as she looked at the long, solemn-faced cowboy.

"I keep saying over and over that he isn't. But they all point out the facts to me. I don't see how he could do it."

"Miss Neilan," Hashknife put a hand on her shoulder, "will you answer me a question, if yuh know the answer?"

"If I know the answer—yes."

"Fine. Did Bill Noon know that there would be a shipment of money on that stage?"

For several moments the girl studied the question.

"He couldn't have been sure," she said slowly. "The night he had the trouble with Enos Riggs we talked about the trouble Dad was having with his drivers, and Bill wondered if he might get the job.

"He knew Dad had gone to Broken Falls, because Dad was afraid Lee Wells might get drunk. Perhaps Dad knew there would be money to be shipped, but I'm sure Bill wouldn't have known this. Perhaps he might have suspected it, because of the fact that Dad went to Broken Falls with Lee."

"I see," muttered Haskknife. "Bill Noon needed money, didn't he?"

"Who doesn't?" retorted the girl quickly.

"True as gospel. Now I'm goin' to get personal, Miss Neilan. Every one seems to think that yo're goin' to marry Bill Noon, and that because Bill's father went broke, Bill ain't got money enough to get married on."

"Well?" she said simply.

"This is personal," said Hashknife softly. "You didn't tell him he'd have to get the money, did yuh?"

"No, I did not! Who said I did?"

"Nobody. I'm tryin' to establish a reason for Bill to hold up that stage. You and Bill didn't quarrel, did yuh?"

"No. I understood how things were. There was no talk of money. We were not engaged. But why do you ask me all these questions?"

Hashknife hooked his thumbs over his belt and traced a pattern in the wet soil with the toe of his boot, while Sleepy gazed in frank admiration at the girl.

"Just lookin' for the truth," said Hashknife. "We've seen things and heard things, but we don't always believe what we see and hear. Have you seen Enos Riggs lately?"

Mazie flushed quickly, her eyes searching the cowboy's face, wondering if he knew about Enos' visit. Then—

"If I tell you something, will you promise not to tell?"

"I sure will," said Hashknife quickly.

And without any elaborations she told

them of her experience with Enos Riggs, and of how she had frightened him away. Hashknife hugged his elbows and chuckled, while Sleepy, visualizing the consternation of the half-breed dashing out into the rain, gun in hand, wiped the tears out of his eyes.

"That's quick thinkin'!" blurted Sleepy admiringly.

Hashknife held out his hand to Mazie.

"I think yo're a regular girl," he told her solemnly. "The man who marries you won't have to do all the thinkin' for the family."

"Nossir, he won't," applauded Sleepy. "He'll have to keep up to snuff in order to do his half of it."

"But don't say anything to anybody about Enos Riggs," she said. "Perhaps he didn't mean any harm."

They promised and went away, filled with admiration of her.

"Where does Enos Riggs fit into this deal?" asked Sleepy.

"Who knows?" replied Hashknife. "He hates Bill Noon—and the hate of a half-breed might cause him to do strange things."

"He hates you, too," reminded Sleepy.

They rode back through the main street, but did not stop. Enos Riggs was standing in front of the Tom-Tom, talking with Tin-Ear Thompson, who waved at them, but the half-breed ignored them.

Hashknife led the way back to the doctor's office. Bill was still unconscious. The doctor was dressing the body wound, and let them in to see it. He explained the course of the bullet, as he showed them where it had made its exit. Hashknife listened closely until the doctor had finished, and then propounded a question—

"Do yuh think that would have knocked him unconscious immediately, Doctor?"

"That's a question, Hartley. It would have knocked him down, but not necessarily unconscious. The wound on his head would have, I'm sure, as it seems to have caused a slight concussion."

"Then in yore opinion, the body wound was inflicted first?"

"Yes, I would think so. Of course it is possible that the two shots were so closely spaced that the second bullet struck him before he fell."

"Then Neilan wasn't killed instantly?"

"No. He lived possibly several minutes after the shooting."

Hashknife and Sleepy went back to the Bar 44, and as far as Sleepy could determine, they were no wiser than they were before going to town. But again Hashknife was thoughtful, preoccupied, smoking many cigarets, his eyes half-closed.

HE DID not join the pitch game that evening, which was something unusual, and in the morning he and Sleepy rode away again. But this time they did not stop at Ghost Dance, but swung into the hills, heading west, following the bank of Frying Pan Creek.

It was not easy going. At times they were forced to leave the creek on account of the high water, and swing back into the hills. They left the open hills and entered the timber, where they were forced to make many detours, as they did not know the country. As far as they could determine there had been no cattle in there since the snow had melted.

There seemed to be an abundance of deer, and once they caught sight of a black bear, industriously searching for grubs. He sat up on his haunches and eyed them quizzically, before going up the ridge, his queer, loose-jointed gallop soon taking him out of sight in a thicket.

Below them they could see the little valley of Frying Pan Creek, half flooded. Finally they swung around a timber point, where far below them they could see a little cabin. It took them an hour to work their way down to it, because of the fallen timber and heavy brush.

It was a small, one-room cabin—the winter home of Enos Riggs, the half-breed. Hashknife had found out its approximate location from the sheriff, who had also told him that there were no other cabins on the creek.

The door had been nailed shut, but the head of an old pick, half buried in the front yard, soon provided an entrance. The cabin contained a rough table, chair, built-in bunk and a small fireplace. There were some odds and ends of canned food in an old box, which had been nailed against the wall.

The floor was of dirt, hard-packed, and near the doorway, tramped into the hard dirt, were quite a number of empty revolver cartridges. Hashknife dug several of them out of the dirt and found them of three calibers—.45, .44 and .38's.

"Looks as though the breed shoots a lot of different guns," observed Sleepy.

"Yeah, it does," smiled Hashknife.

He went out into the yard and looked around. Beside a stump, about fifty feet from the cabin door, were several old cans, which had been perforated with bullets, attesting to the fact that some one had been doing target practise.

Hashknife went back to the cabin and poked around in the accumulation which gathers in the usual bachelor abode in the hills, and in a corner, apparently swept aside with other dèbris, he found another faded, dirty old handkerchief. It was of the same faded blue border and same material as the one he had found on the bush near the stage tragedy.

Hashknife squinted thoughtfully at the dirty piece of cloth, while the smoke from his cigaret curled up past his eye. Sleepy grinned widely and remarked that Enos Riggs was a dude.

"Imagine a trapper usin' a handkerchief, Hashknife."

"I can't quite do it," smiled Hashknife, putting the cloth in his pocket.

But a further search netted him nothing; so they mounted and rode on up the little valley, which led back toward the main divide. Hashknife was surprized at the ease in which they reached the headwaters of the Frying Pan. Beyond them were broken ledges of snow, barring their further progress.

THEY rode across the creek, where a vagrant breeze apprised them of the fact that something had died. It did not take them long to find the cause. Scattered along a high bank among some stunted jack-pines, were the carcasses of twelve steers, partly eaten by wolves and coyotes. Some of them were still half covered with snow. Luckily, many of the hides were intact enough for the two cowboys to find the brands, which showed that these animals were from the Bar 44, Half-Circle N and the Mission Cross L.

"Poor devils got caught in the snow," said Sleepy.

Hashknife considered the carcasses for a while, mounted his horse, and they rode up the south slope, from the creek to where a break in the timber would show them a view of the Ghost Dance Valley, hardly more than a blue mist in the distance.

The tall cowboy rolled a cigaret, shivering slightly in the cold breeze from off the snow banks.

"Sleepy," he said seriously, "what do yuh reckon would make a cow leave the protection of the lower valley and come up here in the timber where there ain't no trails?"

Sleepy paused in rolling a cigaret, stared at Hashknife for a moment and then at the valley.

"A cow don't reason much," said Hashknife. "There wasn't no reason for them animals to come away up here, even if they did. Them cows got caught in the first blizzard. Let's go."

They rode back down the mountains, slowly working their way off the timber ridges, and it was mid-afternoon when they came out on the long slopes which ran down to the 7R ranch. They had gone farther south than they had intended, but the long slopes offered easier riding, and they were in no great hurry.

There were plenty of cattle in sight now. They swung off a ridge and crossed the mouth of a wide coulee, where stood the ruins of an old ranch-house and other buildings, now fallen to decay. There was an old corral near the swampy piece of ground, covered with a scattering growth of willows.

Cattle were crossing there, some of them gobby from the deep mud. They snorted wildly at sight of the two cowboys, and some of them turned back. Deciding that the swamp was too soft for a safe crossing, the two cowboys swung farther south, but Sleepy happened to see an animal floundering in the mire.

It was one of those which had fled at sight of the riders, and it had evidently turned off the beaten trail and was badly bogged. It's floundering efforts only succeeded in miring it deeper, and both men realized that quick work was needed if the life of the animal was to be saved.

They rode back through the willows and Hashknife managed to throw a loop around its neck. Chancing strangulation or a broken neck, he hauled the animal around to where Sleepy roped its front legs, and between them they dragged it to dry land.

The animal was so exhausted that it made no effort to get away when they dismounted to take off their ropes. It was a Circle AVB animal—one of those brought out of

the desert by Buck Rahl—branded on the left hip.

Hashknife fingered the brand closely. It comprised a circle, inside of which was the three initials combined in such a way that the right side of the A made the left side of the V, and the right side of the V was made by the main stem of the B. In other words, the A and B were connected at the bottom, which necessarily formed the letter V.

Sleepy unroped the animal, looping up the two ropes as he watched Hashknife going over the brands with his fingers.

"That's one of the animals that Buck Rahl bought cheap," offered Sleepy.

"Yeah," nodded Hashknife thoughtfully. "I was kinda curious to know how they branded in that country."

They walked back to their horses, allowing the animal to get to its feet. It looked at them, a dazed expression on its face, blatted softly and headed straight back through the mud. But this time it got across, stopped on the bank and looked back, as if to rebuke them for their trouble, and trotted away in the willows.

Sleepy laughed softly and swung into his saddle.

"That's all the thanks yuh ever get from a fool cow," he declared.

Hashknife looked off across the muddy pool, where the cattle were stringing out of the willows, heading into the hills.

"No-o-o-o," he drawled, "I don't reckon she appreciates me half as much as I appreciate her, Sleepy. I suppose we might as well head for home. It'll be supper time when we get there."

"I suppose so," agreed Sleepy. "Another day wasted, eh?"

"No day is ever wasted, Sleepy."

"But we didn't find out anythin', Hashknife."

"Didn't we?" The lines on the face of the lean cowboy seemed to deepen, and into his eyes came the dull, cold gleam of a man who looks into the future and sees things that must happen.

"We did, Sleepy," he said slowly. "I looked ahead today, and I saw some of the things that are written. It wasn't plain. It's still blurred a little, and the writin' is a little shaky, but I made out some of the words; made out enough to know some of the meanin'."

Sleepy squinted at him from beneath the brim of his low-pulled sombrero. The grin-lines were all gone now, and he sat straight in his saddle. Hashknife's words, softly, slowly spoken, were full of meaning to Sleepy Stevens.

"When do yuh read the rest, cowboy?" asked Sleepy.

"I don't need much more, Sleepy. Mebbe I'll write the rest myself, when the time is ripe."

"Well, don't forget that I *sabe* how to punctuate," said Sleepy meaningly, and they smiled at each other.

ALTHOUGH Hashknife and Sleepy did not attend the Neilan funeral, Mark Griswold, Benny O'Neil and Nig Stanton did. Ghost Dance Valley was well represented, as Neilan was one of the old-timers.

"It was one of the best funerals I've ever seen," declared Benny. "The preacher said a lot of nice things about himself, spoke feelin'ly about the need of givin' money to the cannibals and to his church. Accordin' to his talk he was willin' to go fifty-fifty with the Fiji Islanders. He didn't say much about poor old Frank Neilan, except that Frank got what we've all got comin' to us—ashes t' ashes and dust t' dust."

"Yeah," said Nig Stanton grinning. "But don't forget that the choir sang 'Lead, Kindly Light' to the tune of 'Sweet Adeline.' They shore did. And if Miles O'Dowd is a tenor—I'm a nightingale."

"And old Jack Noon and Aunt Jimmy were there," said Griswold. "My——, them two old folks even circled the coffin to take a last look at poor old Frank. And everybody sayin' that Bill Noon killed him. I tell yuh, Hartley, they'll never get a jury in Ghost Dance Valley that'll hang Bill Noon—on account of them old folks."

"And Bill is conscious," added Benny. "He knows everythin' that's goin' on. The sheriff and prosecutin' attorney came up from Broken Falls last night and wanted to serve the papers on Bill; but the doctor swore he'd kill the first —— lawyer or officer that bothered Bill until he was well enough to stand hearin' what the law thought of him."

Hashknife wanted a few words with Bill Noon, so he went to Ghost Dance, but the doctor refused him admittance. At the Tom-Tom Saloon he found Buck Rahl and Tin-Ear Thompson.

Hashknife told Rahl how Sleepy and himself pulled one of his steers out of the bog, and Rahl thanked him for it. Rahl was a swarthy, squint-eyed person, his black hair slightly tinged with gray; a tough, wiry sort of a man about five feet eleven inches tall, weighing about a hundred and forty-five.

His raiment was rather distinctive, as he invariably wore a black Stetson with a narrow brim, black shirt, black muffler and black leather chaps. And even his belt, holster and gun-butt were of somber hue. Buck Rahl was not a talkative man, but a good listener.

"I'm kinda thinkin' about goin' over into the desert country," said Hashknife, as they leaned against the bar, smoking.

"Yeah?"

"Just to look around. I dunno whether we'll like that part of the country, or not. Anyway, I'd like to try it. Is that Circle AVB a big enough outfit for us to strike for a job?"

Buck squinted thoughtfully.

"Mebbe. Al Benson owns it. Not much chance over there this time of year. Pretty hot."

"Much business in Shack City?"

"Yeah."

"I wonder if Al got his ice outfit workin'?" said Tin-Ear.

Buck squinted at Tin-Ear, but did not reply.

"Somebody puttin' in ice at Shack City?" asked Hashknife.

"Benson's tryin' it," said Tin-Ear. "Yuh can't keep meat over there in the summer. Benson owns the butcher business."

The talk drifted to other subjects, and in a few minutes Lee Wells came in.

"Can yuh use another —— good man, Buck?" he asked. "I'm lookin' for a job."

"I dunno," Buck squinted at the big, hulking ex-stage-driver.

"I'm shore open for engagements," grinned Lee.

"All right, Wells; I reckon I can use yuh. But stay sober."

"I'm all through," said Weed sincerely, or at least intending to be sincere. "No more of the stuff for me."

Hashknife left the saloon and went back to his horse. He met Benny O'Neil and told him to tell Griswold that he, Hashknife, was going to Broken Falls and might not be back that night.

It was late in the afternoon when Hashknife rode into Broken Falls, so named because of the double falls of the Ghost Dance River. It was little larger than Ghost Dance town, but of more importance because of being located on the railroad and because it was the county seat.

The sheriff was at his office, and welcomed Hashknife warmly. He told Hashknife of the doctor's refusal to allow them to serve the papers on Bill Noon. He was anxious to know whether Hashknife had found any clues on the rustlers, but the tall cowboy answered decidedly in the negative.

"I reckon it's no use," said the sheriff gloomily. "They was too smart for us."

"Yeah, it looks thataway," agreed Hashknife. "Have yuh got some paper and envelopes around here, Erway? I want to write a letter."

"Sure thing; all yuh need. The county furnishes me a lot more paper than I ever use. Help yourself."

He tossed out a number of sheets, bearing the letter-head of the sheriff's office, and let Hashknife use his desk. The writing of that letter took considerable time, as Hashknife spoiled several sheets of paper—which he put in his pocket—before satisfying himself.

He addressed and stamped the envelope, after which he took it to the post-office, where he asked the postmaster how long it would take a letter to go to Shack City.

"It will go out of here at ten o'clock tonight, and be ready for delivery at Shack City tomorrow morning," the postmaster told him.

Hashknife sauntered up to the depot, where he inquired about the train schedule to Shack City, and found that a passenger train left there at eleven o'clock in the morning, coming to Broken Falls, and that the next one left Shack City at six o'clock in the afternoon. It was a six-hour run from Shack City to Broken Falls.

He ate at a restaurant and rode back to the Bar 44, after telling the sheriff that he would be back the following day.

"I may not be here," said the sheriff. "I've got to go back to an old minin' camp on Palm Creek to serve some papers, and it'll prob'ly be late when I get back."

"All right. Suppose yuh deputize me and give me a key to the office."

The little sheriff looked quizzically at Hashknife.

"Why?"

"Oh, just for instance. I might need a star, and you might need a deputy."

"——, I shore need a deputy, Hartley. Mine got married and went on a honeymoon."

He gave Hashknife a silver star, waived the necessity of an oath, and gave him a key to the office.

"Yo're on the pay-roll of Ghost Dance county," he laughed. "Eighty dollars a month and half of yore funeral expenses, in case yuh get killed in performance of yore duty."

Hashknife laughed and rode away, leaving the little sheriff to puzzle over Hashknife's reasons for wanting to be a deputy.

IT WAS late when Hashknife rode into Ghost Dance. Another drizzling rain was falling, making it very uncomfortable riding. He tied his tired horse at the Tom-Tom hitch-rack and walked to the doorway of the saloon. Tin-Ear Thompson, Lee Wells and Enos Riggs were there, playing poker. The place was comfortably filled, but Hashknife could see none of the Bar 44 outfit.

There was a light in Cooper's store, where several of the older men were sitting around the stove. Hashknife went over there and bought some tobacco. An idea seemed to strike him, and he asked Cooper for a tablet and some envelopes. He wrote a note with the stub of a lead-pencil, enclosed it in an envelope, wrote Buck Rahl's name on the envelope and put on a two-cent stamp.

Wrinkling the clean envelope between his none-too-clean palms, he shoved it in his chaps pocket and went across the street to the Tom-Tom. Tin-Ear Thompson had left the poker-table to get a drink at the bar, and invited Hashknife to partake with him.

"Is Buck Rahl in town tonight?" asked Hashknife.

Tin-Ear shook his head.

"Na-a-aw, he's at the ranch. Whatcha want of him, Hartley?"

Hashknife produced the wrinkled, soiled letter.

"A feller gave me this in Broken Falls," he explained. "Told me to mail it here, but I thought if Buck was here I'd give it to him instead."

"I'll take it to him," offered Tin-Ear.

"We're goin' to the ranch pretty soon."

"All right, Tin-Ear. Don't lose it."

"Aw, ——, I never lost a letter in my life. Here's how."

The 7R cowboy went back to his game, and Hashknife rode out of Ghost Dance, heading into the misty rain, a grin on his face.

"I've flung out my bait," he told himself. "It's up to the fish now. I hope there's a horseshoe sign after my name in the Big Book."

Suddenly he drew rein, swung his horse around and headed back toward town, his horse skidding badly in the mud. He rode into town, riding down the street on the opposite side from the Tom-Tom. The three cowboys from Buck Rahl's ranch came from the saloon and halted at the hitch-rack to put on their slickers.

Hashknife sat his horse in front of Cooper's store until the three riders had melted away in the gloom, and then followed them. He realized that they would ride rather fast, in order to get out of the rain; so he spurted his horse to a mud-slinging gallop.

It was about three miles from Ghost Dance to the 7R ranch; seeming to be thirty miles to Hashknife, over the twisting, muddy road, heading in the blackness of the wet night. He was almost into the ranch-house fence before the dim light of a lamp warned him to stop.

He dismounted and led his horse up to the fence. He could hear some one pounding on a door, as he slid through the fence and cautiously approached the house. Then a voice—

"It's me, Buck—Thompson!"

After a short wait, some one turned up the lamp, picked it up and came to the door. Hashknife slipped closer, as Thompson went in and the door was closed behind him. Hashknife reached the window, where he could get a fair view of the interior.

Buck Rahl, half-dressed, his black hair stringing down over his forehead, was standing beside the lamp, looking down the letter which Hashknife had sent him. It was impossible for Hashknife to hear what was being said. He saw Buck look up from the letter, as if reading it aloud to Thompson. He would have given much to have heard what was said, but the pattering of the rain and the whispering of the wind precluded any chance of it.

After several moments of excited conversation, Thompson came to the door, stepped

outside and walked to the end of the porch, where he called loudly for Enos and Lee. One of them answered, and Thompson went back in the house. A few moments later the other two cowboys came scuffing along through the mud, wondering aloud what it was all about, and went into the house.

Hashknife knew that Buck was telling them about the letter. It seemed to Hashknife that all four of them were trying to talk at once. Buck left the room, coming back in a few minutes with his boots and shirt. Thompson glanced at a clock on the table, and seemed to be arguing with Buck, who nodded and threw the shirt aside.

They talked for several minutes, at which time they seemed to arrive at a definite conclusion, and the three cowboys came out on the porch.

"Well, what in —— do you think of it, Tin-Ear?" asked Lee Wells.

"Aw, ——, I dunno!" snorted Thompson. "It don't look good to me. I'd jist ignore it, if I was Buck, but he's jist —— fool enough to go down there. Somethin' has slipped, Lee."

"I don't like it," growled Wells. "Hashknife Hartley is mixed up in it, I tell yuh."

"Aw ——!" snorted Enos. "That —— sand-hill crane! Mebbe we better go to bed. Five o'clock comes pretty —— quick now."

They filed down to the bunk-house, while Hashknife felt his way back to his horse, chuckling to himself. The appellation of sand-hill crane amused him greatly.

"More like a mud-hen," he told his horse. "I'm glad I didn't go home, that's a cinch."

He took the road which led from the 7R to the main road to Broken Falls, letting his horse pick its own gait. He knew the animal was tired from the heavy going, and he promised it a big feed of oats and hay in Broken Falls.

It was nearly five o'clock in the morning when he rode into the livery-stable and turned his horse over to a sleepy stableman.

"Rub him down good," said Hashknife.

"He shore looks like he needed it," grinned the man, inspecting the horse by lantern light. "I'll fix him up, pardner."

Hashknife went straight to the sheriff's office, let himself in and locked the door behind him. The sheriff had a little home at the other end of town, and did not sleep in the office. Hashknife's inspection disclosed the fact that the four cells were vacant, doors wide open, and equipped with spring locks.

He sat down and enjoyed a smoke. The one big gambling house of the town was evidently doing a good business, as it was fully lighted at that time in the morning. He watched the clock, as he stretched out on a cot and blew smoke rings at the ceiling, and it was nearly six o'clock, with no sign of daylight, when he shut the outer door behind him, leaving the lamp burning, and sauntered up the street.

He knew just what he wanted to do, but did not know just how it was going to turn out. He looked in at the door of the big gambling house, but could see no familiar face. He wished Sleepy were with him. Sleepy, who was probably sleeping soundly at the Bar 44, blissfully ignorant of everything.

A RIDER came slowly into town, his mount splashing through the muck of the street. He swung in at the long hitch-rack near where Hashknife stood, dismounted and tied his horse, which shook violently and evidently stepped on its rider's foot.

"Whoa, you —— fool!" growled an unmistakable voice. "Try standin' on yore own feet, yuh jug-head!"

"Did he step on yore li'l piggies?" queried Hashknife.

The rider stopped swearing and came slowly around the end of the rack. It was Sleepy Stevens.

"Well, f'r —— sake, what are you doin' here?" exclaimed Sleepy softly.

"Listenin' to you swear, cowboy."

"Thasso? Huh. I've been wonderin' where yuh were. Benny came home and told the old man you might not be home last night. It sounded kinda funny to me; so about ten o'clock I decided to take a look around. Yuh wasn't in Ghost Dance. I hung around the Tom-Tom for a while, but Lee Wells was kinda loud; so I went down to see how Bill Noon was comin'.

"I talked to Aunt Jimmy and the old man for a long time, and then I went back to the Tom-Tom. That —— trio from the 7R had left; so I forked my bronc and rode down here."

"I'm glad yuh did," said Hashknife. "I may need yuh."

"Yeah, sure," complained Sleepy. "But yuh won't never let me in on anythin'. I've got to poke my own way in."

"How are the old folks feelin', Sleepy?"

"Not so good. They've talked to Bill. He dunno what it's all about; don't remember a thing. The doctor won't let 'em tell him a thing that'll excite him."

"Did they say anythin' about Mazie bein' down to see him?"

"She was down there tonight."

"Oh, yeah. That's why yuh stayed to talk with the old folks."

"Well," said Sleepy defiantly, "I didn't run away when she came, if that's what yuh mean. She's stayin' with Mrs. Cooper for a few days. Her and me had quite a talk up there at Cooper's gate. I told her that you'd prob'ly prove Bill Noon innocent, and she cried on my shoulder."

"Did, eh?" Hashknife choked slightly. "You ought to save that shirt of yours for a souvenir."

"It wasn't my shirt; it was my coat. And the —— rain has washed all of it away."

"Uh-huh. And where was yore hands when she was cryin' on yore shoulder Sleepy?"

"Well, my ——, where do yuh suppose? Wasn't anybody makin' me keep 'em up above my head, was there?"

Hashknife's laugh was choked off suddenly, as several riders swung in at the north end of the street. He shoved Sleepy in beside a horse, as the riders swung in above them and dismounted. Their voices were plain enough. It was Buck Rahl, Enos Riggs, Lee Wells and Tin-Ear Thompson.

Three of them walked past Hashknife and Sleepy, heading for the saloon, while the fourth man, Buck Rahl, was having trouble with his tie-rope. The other three men had stepped into the saloon, when Buck came along in the darkness, slapping the water off his sombrero.

And as he passed them Hashknife stepped out, almost against him, and showed a six-shooter against Buck's waistline. The owner of the 7R jerked to a stop suddenly.

"Get his gun," said Hashknife softly and Sleepy obeyed quickly.

"It's you, is it, Hartley?" growled Rahl.

"Yeah, it's me. Head across the street, Buck."

"What in —— is all this hocus-pocus, Hartley? By ——, you can't shove a gun in my ribs and get away with it."

"It has been done just now, Buck. And yuh better be glad it wasn't worse than it was."

They guided Buck Rahl across the street and down to the sheriff's office, where Hashknife opened the door and motioned him in.

"Now, by ——, I demand an explanation!" exploded Buck. "If it's a joke, it's gone far enough."

Buck was righteously indignant and wrathful. Sleepy grinned foolishly, because he didn't know what it was all about. But Hashknife's serious face did not change a line. If it was a joke with Hashknife, it was a serious one.

"Why don'tcha say somethin', you —— fool?" blurted Buck.

"There's nothin' to say," said Hashknife. "So why waste a lot of words? This way, please."

He led Buck back to a cell and motioned for him to go in, but the cattleman balked.

"By ——, no! This is goin' too far, Hartley! What right have you to put anybody in jail?"

Hashknife turned back the lapel of his vest, disclosing the insignia of office.

"Better go in Buck," he said softly.

BUCK squinted at the hard face of the tall cowboy for a moment and stepped inside the cell. The door snapped shut behind him.

"Don't think for a moment that I'll stay here," gritted Buck.

Hashknife grinned widely.

"I reckon you'll stay a while," said Hashknife. "I ain't got any keys, and I don't expect the sheriff will show up down here before late in the afternoon."

"Well, you'll pay for this, I'll tell yuh that right now."

"If I owe yuh anythin' I'll pay, Buck."

Hashknife walked back to the office, where Sleepy was sitting on the cot, rolling a smoke, his face spread in a grin. He didn't know what it was all about, but it was action—something started.

Hashknife blew out the lamp and they went outside, locking the door behind them. Over near the big saloon was a restaurant, where Hashknife had eaten his meal the day before; so they went across the street and ordered breakfast. They selected seats facing the front of the building, and were eating breakfast when Lee Wells and Tin-Ear Thompson came in.

"Howdy, gents," greeted Hashknife.

"Hyah," Lee Wells hung up his wet hat on a nail and sat down. "When did you fellers get in?"

"Just a few minutes ago," said Hashknife easily. "By golly, that road between here and Ghost Dance sure is a bog."

"Down kinda early, ain't yuh?" said Tin-Ear.

"Mebbe. We usually travel at night, Tin-Ear. Yuh kinda miss the heat of the day thataway."

Tin-Ear snorted. The heat of the day at this time of year would average about fifty degrees.

"Yo're kinda early, too, ain't yuh?" queried Sleepy.

"We've been here all night," lied Tin-Ear.

"Yeah, I thought you had. That must 'a' been yore spirit I seen in Ghost Dance a while after midnight."

"Don't mind Tin-Ear," laughed Lee. "He can't remember back that far. You fellers didn't see nothin' of Buck Rahl when yuh came in, didja?"

"Is he down here, too?" asked Hashknife innocently.

"Yeah—came with us."

"It looks like a convention to me," grinned Sleepy.

Tin-Ear scowled at Sleepy, but said nothing.

They finished their breakfast without any further conversation. Lee and Tin-Ear went out first. It was daylight now, but the rain had not ceased. Hashknife and Sleepy went to the big saloon, designated by the name of "The Falls."

The three boys from the 7R were there, standing around, waiting for Buck Rahl to show up. Hashknife saw them looking curiously at him, and Enos said something in an undertone, at which both men seemed interested.

Hashknife wondered if they had any idea that he was to blame for Buck Rahl's disappearance. He could understand their anxiety over the disappearance of their boss, especially as they knew why he had come to town.

They left the saloon and wandered about the town, looking for Buck, whose horse still stood at the hitch-rack. Hashknife and Sleepy wandered up to the sheriff's office, tried the locked door, while Lee Wells and Enos Riggs watched them from the other side of the street.

It made them feel that if Buck was in the locked office, it was no fault of Hashknife and Sleepy, because, after trying the door, they walked back up the street toward the sheriff's home.

THE sheriff's wife answered their knock on the door, and informed them that the sheriff had left early that morning, but would be home by four o'clock in the afternoon. Hashknife made a quick mental calculation, thanked her and they went away.

"Are yuh goin' to tell me what it's all about?" asked Sleepy, as they went back down the street.

Hashknife shook his head slowly.

"It's a deep, dark secret, Sleepy. My ——, I hope it works out. Up to the present time it has worked beautifully, but from now on it'll be pure luck. I feel it in my bones that I'm right. I know I'm right in part of it. I know enough right now to put the deadwood on the rustlers of the Ghost Dance, but I'm shootin' for more than that."

"More than that, Hashknife?"

"Sure. A dead man or a prisoner don't pay no dividends. Say, I'll betcha them whippoorwills from the 7R are gettin' a heap worried because Buck don't show up."

And they were. When Buck did not follow them into the saloon right away, they thought nothing of it, but his continued absence worried them. They separated and looked for him, meeting at the Falls saloon, no wiser than when they started.

They questioned every one, but no one had seen him. Lee Wells broke his promise not to drink any more, and after he had absorbed several drinks he announced the disappearance of Buck Rahl in the saloon. But the announcement did not make much of an impression, because few people there were interested in Buck Rahl.

Hashknife and Sleepy played pool in the Falls saloon, paying no attention to the three men from the 7R, who were drinking regularly. Le Saint, Salt Herring and Miles O'Dowd came to town and to them Lee Wells told of losing their boss.

"I knowed he'd get lost some day," said Miles. "A feller like Buck hadn't ort t' ever come to town."

"Well, it ain't nothin' to laugh at," declared Tin-Ear. "We left him at the hitch-rack before daylight, and ain't seen him since.

"Didja look out at the rack?" asked Miles.

"Out at the rack? What for?"

"Well," said Miles seriously, "yuh never can tell. Mebbe he tied himself up and turned the horse loose."

And that was about all the satisfaction they could get out of the Mission Cross L outfit. About noon that day, Lee Wells went up to the sheriff's home, seeking information, but the sheriff's wife told him that the sheriff had left town early in the morning—alone.

Le Saint heard so much about Rahl's disappearance that he talked with Hashknife about it.

"It looks kinda funny," observed Le Saint, his pock-marked old face twisted seriously. "I wonder if anythin' has happened to Buck?"

"That's hard to tell," said Hashknife. "Lee Wells says that Buck rode in with them early this mornin', but that they left him at the hitch-rack and he never showed up. Looks fishy to me, Le Saint."

"Yuh mean—they might—hm-m-m-m!" Le Saint cleared his throat and considered the matter.

"I never said they did anythin' to him," reminded Hashknife.

"Sure yuh didn't. Anyway, the whole town is lookin' for him."

"Good huntin' to 'em," smiled Hashknife.

The day passed slowly to Hashknife. He wanted to take food to his prisoner, but was afraid some one might see him entering the sheriff's office. Several times Lee Wells, Riggs and Thompson had gone to the hitch-rack, evidently intending to go home, but changed their minds. Hashknife could see them arguing about it, and finally they would go back to the saloon.

The sheriff rode in at a little after four o'clock, and Hashknife met him in front of the office.

"What do yuh know?" he asked, as he dismounted.

"I know the town is kinda upset," smiled Hashknife. "Buck Rahl is missin'."

"Missing'?" the little sheriff squinted at Hashknife.

"Yeah. Rode in here this mornin' before daylight with Wells, Thompson and the half-breed. They left him at the hitch-rack over there and went in the Falls saloon. They haven't seen Buck since."

"Well, that's funny, Hartley. Where do yuh reckon he went?"

"Why, he's in jail."

"In jail?" the sheriff gawped at Hashknife vacantly.

"Uh-huh. I put him in a cell before daylight."

"Well, now!" the sheriff tilted his hat over his eyes, as he rubbed the back of his head wonderingly.

He glanced around the street and back at Hashknife.

"What for?"

"Experiment, Sheriff."

"Yea-a-a-ah? Lemme git this straight. You put Buck Rahl into jail for an experiment?"

"Sure."

"Mm-m-m-m. Well, I'll be ——! Experiment, eh? Say, don'tcha know you've got to have a better reason than that to put a man in jail?"

"Well," drawled Hashknife, "I told yuh it was an experiment."

"I know yuh did, Hartley. But I—I—what's the experiment?"

"It ain't had no chance to work yet."

"No-o-o? Huh! You mean to say that you put Buck in jail to make an experiment. ——, that ain't legal! Don'tcha know it'll make me a lot of trouble? Yuh can't put men in jail thataway, Hartley. We better let him out right away, eh?"

"Nope."

"Nope? Say, who in —— is sheriff around here?"

"Listen, Erway," Hashknife grew serious. "Leave Buck in there for another hour, will yuh. An hour more won't hurt him and it may prove the experiment. If anybody asks yuh where Buck is, you don't know anythin' about him; *sabe?*"

"But —— it, I don't know what yo're doin', Hartley. It don't look good to me."

"Do you remember the letter you got from Al Miller, secretary of the Cattlemen's Association?"

The sheriff cocked one eye at Hashknife.

"Yeah, I remember it."

"What did he say about me?"

"Well," the little sheriff shifted his feet nervously, "he said to turn yuh loose on it, Hartley."

"And you want to stop me, eh?"

"My ——, I'm not tryin' to stop yuh! I'm jist thinkin' what Buck Rahl is goin' to

do when he gets loose. Lemme in on it, will yuh? I'd kinda like to know."

Hashknife looked at his watch and grinned slowly.

"I'll let yuh in on it pretty soon. Lee Wells, Tin-Ear and the half-breed are watchin' us from the Falls saloon. Don't turn around. Get on yore horse and ride home. When yuh come back, circle the street and meet me at the back door."

"All right."

The little sheriff mounted and rode on up the street, while Hashknife sauntered up to a general store, where he waited for Sleepy, who was coming across the street.

Together they went through the store and departed through a rear door. They worked their way around to the rear door of the jail, where they waited for the sheriff.

"Them 7R jiggers were watchin' you from the saloon," said Sleepy. "I reckon they're suspicious of us."

"If they ain't, they ought to be suspicious of somebody. I'll bet Buck is ready to chaw a side out of the cell."

In a few minutes the sheriff joined them and they went into the building, half of which was the office and the other half comprised the jail. A narrow hallway separated the cells and led straight from the rear door to the office entrance.

AS THEY passed down the hallway Buck Rahl came to the bars of his cell, staring at them. Upon beholding the sheriff, his righteous indignation knew no bounds. He cursed the sheriff with every bit of profanity he had ever learned, but Hashknife shoved the sheriff ahead of him and closed the heavy door, cutting off Buck's opinions.

"My ——, that was awful!" exploded the sheriff, wiping his brow with the sleeve of his coat. "If this fool experiment of yours don't work, I'm goin' to pull out ahead of Buck."

"So am I," grinned Hashknife.

"He sure can express himself," laughed Sleepy. "We wasn't in that hallway very long, but I heard words that I never heard before in all my life. I'll betcha he'll grow fangs if yuh leave him in there twenty-four hours. I never seen a man as full of venom as he is."

Hashknife laughed and unlocked the door from the inside. He peered out through the window, but could not see any of the 7R outfit. The sheriff paced the office, nervous over things. He was a conscientious sort of a person, and the incarceration of Buck Rahl bothered him.

"In a case of illegal arrest and detention, Buck can make it pretty hot for me," he told Hashknife.

"Sure," grinned Hashknife. "But he wasn't arrested. I never said a danged word about arrestin' him. All I done was to stick a gun in his ribs and march him over here."

"F'r gosh sake! Stuck a gun in his ribs, eh?"

"Kidnaped him. He can't hold you responsible, as long as I didn't put him under arrest.' You didn't know anythin' about it."

"Well, that might help," sighed the sheriff.

Hashknife rolled a cigaret carefully, his brow wrinkled in thought, while the sheriff watched him closely, trying to fathom Hashknife's reasons for jailing Buck Rahl, who had always borne a good reputation.

From far away came the long-drawn wail of a locomotive. The passenger-train from the north was on time. It was not over two blocks to the depot from the office, and they heard the train grind to a stop. Hashknife walked to a side window and drew the curtain aside.

He could see part of the little depot, and as he watched, a man came into view; a big man, dressed in a black coat, dark gray trousers and a big black Stetson. He was walking slowly, his hat pulled low over his eyes.

Hashknife opened the door a trifle, listening to the man's footsteps on the old wooden sidewalk. As he came closer, Hashknife opened the door and stood in the doorway.

The stranger came up to the doorway, looking quizzically at Hashknife. He was a burly-looking sort of a man, past middle age; heavy featured; his dark eyes set deeply under heavy brows. His gaze shifted from Hashknife to the sheriff's sign.

"Yo're Mr. Benson?" asked Hashknife. The man nodded shortly.

"We were lookin' for yuh," said Hashknife pleasantly. "Yore train was on time."

Benson did not reply, but followed Hashknife into the office, where Hashknife introduced him to the sheriff and Sleepy. The big man looked closely at Hashknife, suspiciously, it seemed, but sat down.

"Did yuh bring the money?" asked Hashknife. The question was a bit abrupt and the big man jerked his head slightly.

"I want a little more information," he said huskily.

"You got Buck's letter, didn't yuh?"

"Yeah, I got his letter. But it didn't tell much. Where's Buck?"

"He's back in one of the cells."

"In a cell, eh? He didn't say anything about a cell."

"No, I know he didn't. But he's back there, Benson. When this deal is finished he can go."

"He can, eh?" Benson wet his heavy lips. "I see. What did he tell? Why did he—"

"Confess?" Hashknife laughed softly. "Because we had the deadwood on him, Benson. It was a foolish trick to change that Half-Circle N to a Circle AVB the way you did. Why didn't yuh slap on the regular Circle AVB over the Half-Circle N? Because the Half-Circle N was a little too big, eh? Made a blotchy job. Well, it wasn't hard to find where the runnin'-iron had made a new scab. I asked Buck about it and he said you was the one that schemed that all out, and he—"

"*I* was?" Benson half lifted from his chair. "He's a —— liar!" The big Dry Lake cattleman's eyes blazed with wrath. "I never did! By ——, it was his scheme. He wanted those Half-Circle N cattle for his part of it. He helped brand 'em. If he says it was my idea, he's a dirty liar!"

The sheriff had stood up, his eyes wide, wonderment written in every line of his face, his mouth half-open. This was something he had never dreamed about. This man was confessing to the theft of the Ghost Dance cattle. Sleepy was watching Benson, a smile on his lips. He was used to surprizes from Hashknife.

"Mebbe he lied," said Hashknife easily. "He's kinda anxious to save his own hide, Benson. He admitted that he took the Half-Circle N cattle for his share, and that you butchered a lot of the others and sold the meat in Shack City."

Benson did not deny this. Hashknife was forced to admire the nerve of the man.

"What you got wasn't the pick of the valley," said Hashknife. "We figured 'em all in at about twenty dollars per head, and that as long as Buck got all the Half-Circle N cattle, yore share would be about twelve thousand dollars."

"I know," Benson nodded coldly. "We're caught. I was a —— fool to listen to Buck Rahl. I've got the money to pay."

"It fooled us for a while," said Hashknife. "You took the stock out of the valley right after the fall round-up, eh?"

"Yeah."

"And you got caught in the first blizzard," continued Hashknife. "I found where a dozen cattle died up near the head of Fryin' Pan Creek."

"That was a —— of a place to take 'em over," said Benson wearily.

"And yore men stayed at the half-breed's cabin while yuh was bunchin' 'em."

Benson looked up quickly.

"So that —— breed squealed, did he?"

"Nope. Yore men done some target practise and I found all their empty cartridge shells on the half-breed's floor."

"Yea-a-a-ah?" Benson looked at Hashknife, a growing suspicion in his eyes. "Bring Buck out here."

Hashknife turned to the goggle-eyed sheriff.

"Bring Buck."

The sheriff went to the door and into the hallway. Buck began to curse him as soon as he appeared, and Benson got to his feet, staring back toward the cells. They heard the bolt turn and in a moment the sheriff appeared with Buck.

The boss of the 7R was so mad that his lips were white. He glared at Hashknife for a moment, and then blinked at Benson, who stood facing him, his face set in harsh lines.

"You!" he breathed. "By ——, I want to know what's goin' on around here! What's this all about? I've been in this —— jail ever since daylight, and I'm sure as —— goin' to make somebody pay for it."

Benson turned his head slowly and looked at Hashknife. He realized that something was wrong. He turned back to the white-lipped Buck Rahl and said—

"You —— yaller coyote!"

Buck moved forward a pace, staring at Benson.

"What in —— do you mean, Al? What are you doin' here?"

"YOU dirty quitter!" snarled Benson. "You send me a letter, after you get in a tight place and squeal like a rabbit."

"I send you a letter?" Buck forgot to be mad for a moment. "I never sent you

any letter, Al. I got yore letter last—"

"My letter?" roared Benson. "Why —— yuh, I never wrote you any letter."

"You're a liar."

Benson started toward Buck, but Sleepy stepped between them.

"Not in here," said Sleepy calmly. "Buck's a prisoner."

Benson halted, his lips twisted with anger.

"The next thing you'll do is to swear that yuh never confessed."

"Confessed to what?" breathed Buck, thoroughly alarmed.

"To stealin' all them Ghost Dance cattle," said Hashknife.

Buck jerked back, his eyes filled with fear. He tried to say something, but his tongue refused to function. Benson stared at him, realizing that something was wrong.

He flashed a glance at Hashknife, and found himself looking down the muzzle of a heavy six-shooter.

"Don't move, Benson," said Hashknife coldly. "You sure fell for the trap. Search him for a gun, Sleepy."

It took Sleepy about ten seconds to remove a short, heavy caliber revolver from Benson's coat pocket and another one from a shoulder-holster. Buck was swearing softly now, as if he were unable to lift his voice. Benson backed against the wall, his lips shut tightly.

"A trap, eh?" he said hoarsely. "Who in —— sent me that letter?"

"I did," replied Hashknife. "I needed yuh, Benson. Oh, yuh fell for my game. You had too much to lose up in the desert country; so I knew you'd come. You swallowed Buck's confession, because you knew from that letter that he had been caught.

"I signed yore name to a letter to Buck, asking him to meet yuh here today. I didn't just know how I was goin' to work it, but I got a chance to capture Buck. I felt sure you'd take the first train down here and bring the money. Give it to me."

"Don't give a him a —— thing!" roared Buck. "They're lyin' to yuh, Al. They don't know a —— thing, I tell yuh!"

Benson looked at Buck and his eyes shifted to Hashknife.

"Don't know a thing, eh? The —— they don't. They had to know most all of it in order to write me that letter."

He drew a bulky envelope from his pocket and handed it to Hashknife.

"There's my share of it."

Hashknife handed it to the amazed sheriff. Then he turned to Buck and motioned toward the sheriff's desk.

"Set down over there, Buck," he said.

Wonderingly, the dazed Rahl sat down, staring blankly at Hashknife, who spread a blank piece of paper in front of him and filled a pen.

"Write a bill of sale to Jack Noon for five hundred of your cattle, including all those branded with the Circle AVB."

Buck stared at Hashknife. He did not seem to understand. He looked at the dripping pen in his hand and at the sheet of white paper on the desk.

"Wh-what—why should I—"

"Write it," said Hashknife coldly. "It's yore one chance, Buck. I can't guarantee that the law will let yuh off, but it won't be hard on a thief that gives back what he stole."

Slowly Buck Rahl wrote out the bill of sale; wrote it in a shaky hand, giving five hundred head of cattle to old Jack Noon; giving him back all the cattle he had lost. When he had signed his name he leaned back in the chair, his forehead beaded with perspiration.

Hashknife turned to the sheriff, a quizzical expression in his eyes. The sheriff hardly knew what it was all about, but he was grasping more of it every minute.

"There ain't a man in Ghost Dance Valley that won't be willin' to forget the stolen cattle, if they get paid for 'em," said Hashknife slowly. "I forged Buck Rahl's name to a letter in order to get Benson to bring his share of the steal down here to me.

"There's Buck's bill of sale for his share of the loot. Nobody loses, Sheriff; nobody knows anythin' about this, except us five. I know Buck and Benson won't never tell; Sleepy and me never have told anythin', and you won't.

"If you want to put these men in jail and try 'em for stealin' cattle—that's yore business. Yuh might convict 'em, but it would have to be on yore testimony—not mine. I made 'em pay back what they borrowed last fall, and I don't think they'll ever go crooked again. What do yuh think?"

The little sheriff blinked slowly.

"You won't testify against 'em, Hartley?"

"Nope. I shoot square, even with a rustler. I could have got 'em cold on what I knew; but I wanted restitution."

"Well, I—I—" the sheriff faltered, swallowing heavily. "As it stands, I don't hardly understand what it's all about. Mebbe we better foller yore advice. How will yuh give this money back?"

"By just givin' it back and sayin' nothin'. Jack Noon is my friend, and he'll be so glad to get his cows back that he won't peep."

Hashknife turned to Buck Rahl, who was still at the desk, staring at the floor.

"Go home, Buck," he said, not unkindly. "A few folks will know about this, but they won't know all about it."

Buck got slowly to his feet and went to the door. He turned and looked at Hashknife, but did not say anything. Then he stepped outside and walked toward the Falls saloon. Sleepy went to the door.

"Them three punchers must 'a' gone home," he told Hashknife. "Their horses are gone from the rack."

"Probably gone to Ghost Dance, lookin' for Buck."

Hashknife handed the guns back to Benson, who put them in his pocket.

"I hate like —— to be branded a rustler," he said slowly. "And I hate to lose twelve thousand dollars. But by ——, I'm glad to meet a man with the nerve you've got, tall feller. It was my first piece of crooked work—and the last—and if you ever need a job real bad, come up to the Dry Lake country and go to work for me, will yuh?"

"I might do it," smiled Hashknife. "Yuh know this is the first rustlin' I ever cleared up without a lot of powder bein' burned. It's better this way, Benson."

"Yeah, it sure is," agreed Benson.

HE SMILED slightly and shoved the sombrero off his forehead.

"Yuh came —— near not seein' me down here. When I read that letter this mornin' I —— near had heart failure. My ——, yuh made it strong! And it was on the sheriff's letter paper, too. When you set a trap yuh sure bait it good and strong."

"I never send a child when a man is needed," grinned Hashknife. "It was real square of yuh to bring the money. Shake."

They shook hands. Benson glanced at his watch.

"There'll be a train along in fifteen minutes," he said. "If that's all I can do for yuh, I'll be goin'."

"That's all," said Hashknife. Benson walked out of the office and went slowly toward the depot, while Hashknife, the sheriff and Sleepy looked at each other.

"Of all the —— things I ever heard about —that's got 'em all beat!" exploded the sheriff. "Why, Hartley, you could have knocked me down with a feather. Yuh can yet, for that matter. How in —— did yuh ever find out all this stuff?"

"Simple," grinned Hashknife. "I knew that the cattle had to be taken out of here right after the fall round-up. There was only one place for 'em to go—to the desert. Up Fryin' Pan Creek and over the divide was the best way out. I figured that the rustlers stayed at the half-breed's cabin while they bunched the cattle for the drive.

"Then we found a dozen critters still under some snow; and found them in a place where a cow wouldn't go unless it was driven. Buck Rahl sold short last fall. I wasn't sure that Buck was in on the game until I found that he had bought a lot of Circle AVB cattle—cheap. I found that Al Benson owns all the butcher shops in Shack City. That would give him a chance to dispose of a lot of beef.

"But when I found that the Half-Circle N had been changed to a Circle AVB, I knew that Benson's outfit had done it, and I knew that Buck had brought in about five hundred head just a few days ago—all Circle AVB. So I took a chance and sent those letters."

"That beats me," said the sheriff. "I'm kinda dumb, I reckon. Who'd ever think of doin' a thing like that?"

"He does the dangdest things," complained Sleepy. "Never lets anybody in on 'em."

"I reckon that's true," the little sheriff gazed admiringly at the tall cowpuncher, who leaned against the desk, puffing on his cigaret, as he perused Buck's bill of sale.

"If he could only do somethin' to help Bill Noon out," suggested the sheriff softly. "But that's a cinch, I reckon. Yuh can't expect a man to perform a real miracle."

Hashknife folded up the bill of sale and put it in his pocket, squinting his left eye away from the smoke of his cigaret.

"I'd kinda like to give this to the old man," he said. "It will cheer him up quite a lot."

"Yo're danged right!" exclaimed the sheriff. "You can give this money back, too, if yuh want to."

Hashknife shook his head.

"No, that's yore job. Kinda split it between the Bar 44 and the Mission Cross L, accordin' to what they lost."

"Well, all right. You might let Mark Griswold in on it just a little. I'll handle Le Saint."

"How about a ride to Ghost Dance?" asked Hashknife. "You'd kinda like to get a report on Bill Noon, wouldn't yuh?"

"Yeah, but—it's gettin' kinda late."

Sleepy walked to the door and looked across the street. Buck Rahl was mounting at the hitch-rack, and Sleepy watched him ride out of town. He told Hashknife and the sheriff that Buck had gone.

"Go over to the saloon and see if yuh can find where the rest of the 7R gang went," said Hashknife.

Sleepy was back in a few minutes, with the information that Wells, Riggs and Tin-Ear had gone to Ghost Dance.

"Still lookin' for Buck Rahl," laughed Hashknife. "Get yore horse, Sheriff, and we'll all ride up there."

"Well, I s'pose I can. After what's happened today, I ought to be willin' to go anywhere with yuh."

BUCK RAHL had walked from the sheriff's office in sort of a daze. It was so unreal that he wondered how soon he would wake up and find it all a dream. Several men in the saloon asked him where he had been all day, but he did not tell them. He inquired for his three men, and was informed that they had just ridden away, heading for Ghost Dance, still looking for him.

Ignoring their further questions, he mounted and rode away. Unlike Al Benson, he did not appreciate the fact that Hashknife had merely made him give back the cattle he had stolen. Buck was of a single-track mind. That the tall, serious-faced cowboy had tricked Benson into admitting both their guilt in the matter galled Buck's soul. He cursed Benson for falling for such a trap, never thinking that he had fallen for another letter, which he believed had been written by Benson.

Buck had little faith in human nature. He thoroughly believed that in a few hours all of Ghost Dance would know that he was the one who had engineered the rustling deal. Knowing that Wells, Enos Riggs and Tin-Ear Thompson were but a short way ahead of him, he spurred his horse into a swift gallop, overtaking them just before they reached the point where the 7R road intersected with the main highway.

They saw him coming and yelled their astonishment at him before he could bring his horse to a skidding stop in the muddy road.

"Whereabouts in —— have you been?" demanded Wells.

"In jail!" exploded Rahl.

"In jail?"

"What jail?"

"What for?"

"Who put yuh in jail, Buck?"

The questions came too fast for Buck to answer.

"Aw, shut up!" roared Wells. "Let him tell it."

"It won't take long," gritted Buck, glancing back down the road. "That ——, long-geared Hartley was there at the hitch-rack this mornin'. He shoved a gun in my ribs and herded me to jail. —— his soul, he locked me in a cell and refused to tell me what it was all about.

"That letter you brought me last night—he wrote it—Hartley, the dirty pup!"

"Hartley wrote it?" wailed Wells. "No, Buck!"

"I say he did! —— him, he wrote a letter to Al Benson and signed my name to it. He used the sheriff's paper, and let Benson think I was in jail. He trapped Benson! By ——, he made Benson believe that I had confessed to stealin' them cows, and Benson coughed up what he knew.

"He told Benson," Buck panted heavily, "he told Benson that our only chance was for him to bring twelve thousand dollars to pay back his half of the steal—and the —— fool brought it. And then they made me set down and write a bill of sale for five hundred head of cattle to old Jack Noon! —— him, he got the deadwood on us, I tell yuh!"

The three cowboys looked at each other in consternation. Their destiny was too closely linked with that of Buck Rahl for them to feel at all secure.

"Well, for —— sake!" blurted Tin-Ear. "Our goose is shore cooked! Let's hit for the ranch, grab what we can, and head for the hills."

"Take it easy," advised Wells. "How does it come that yo're out of jail, Buck?"

"They turned me loose. They let Benson go. Didn't I tell yuh that we paid back what we stole."

"Where does that hit us?" demanded Weed. "They know —— well that you and Benson didn't do all that work alone, Buck."

"I dunno," said Buck vaguely. "I dunno about that, Lee. They said that nobody, except the five of us would ever know about it."

"The —— they did!" Thus Tin-Ear nervously. "What five?"

"Why, the sheriff, Hartley, Stevens, Benson and me."

Wells stared at Buck for a moment and began laughing.

"Promised to not tell, eh? Five of 'em, eh? Outside of you and Benson, it leaves only Hartley, Stevens and that —— little runt of a sheriff! By ——, this is good! Did Benson pay in cash?"

"Yeah. Twelve thousand in cash, Lee."

"What good does that do us?" asked the half-breed, who was extremely nervous.

His head seemed on a pivot, as he tried to watch their back track and keep up with the conversation.

"What good?" snapped Wells. "Why, you —— fool, do yuh think for a minute we'll let 'em get away with that kinda stuff? Do yuh think I'm goin' to let three men go away, knowin' I'm a rustler? And them with twelve thousand dollars in cash!"

Buck Rahl blinked rapidly, as Well's scheme filtered through his muddled brain.

"Yuh see what I mean, don'tcha, Buck?" asked Wells.

"To wipe 'em out, Lee?"

"Oh, what the ——! They promised not to tell. How long would that promise hold good. Do yuh want to go along, branded a rustler? They've got the deadwood on yuh, Buck. Why, ——, yore herd is all shot, if they collect that five hundred head. The game can't be played again; so what in —— good will it do you to stay here in Ghost Dance Valley any longer?"

"No good," Buck shook his head slowly.

He looked back down the road, his features twisted with anger. His hand reached back to the empty holster, and he swore bitterly.

"No gun, eh?" said Enos Riggs.

"No, —— 'em!" Buck turned quickly to Weed. "And we want to be —— well heeled when we tackle 'em. Erway is a —— good man with a six-gun, and I'll bet Hartley and Stevens know how to throw lead. A man with the guts that Hartley has got ain't goin' to lay down when the lead starts sailin'."

"I've got to pay him back, too," said Enos, remembering that Hashknife had speared him with the billiard-cue.

"Let's go to the ranch," suggested Wells. "We've got to be all fixed, in case anythin' goes wrong. We can head for Ghost Dance right away. If Erway don't come with Hartley and Stevens, we'll make a special trip to Broken Falls. He can't put that money in the bank tonight, Buck. And we'll take that bill of sale off whoever is carryin' it. By ——, we'll settle it all tonight in our favor, or tomorrow mornin' will find us half-way to the desert, where we know people that will keep us under cover until things die down. How's that idea, Buck?"

"Suits me," growled Buck. "Let's go."

AND while the 7R outfit headed for home, Hashknife, Sleepy and the sheriff rode toward Ghost Dance, all unconscious of the fact that Buck Rahl was not satisfied with making forced restitution for his misdeed.

The little sheriff had begged Hashknife to take charge of the money, and Hashknife had put the thick bundle of bills inside his vest. It was a long ride in the dark, splashing over the crooked, muddy road. The rain had ceased, but the damp cold seemed to penetrate through their heavy slickers, and they were glad when the yellow lights of the main street of Ghost Dance appeared in the dark.

But the ease with which his restitution scheme had worked did not serve to make Hashknife incautious. He led the others from hitch-rack to hitch-rack, but there was no sign of the horses belonging to Wells, Tin-Ear and the half-breed.

"Didja expect to find 'em here?" asked Sleepy, as they tied their horses at the Tom-Tom rack.

"I didn't know but what we might," replied Hashknife. "They were huntin' for Buck Rahl, it seems. And would they look for him at the ranch? I'm just wonderin'," he said, after a short pause, "if Buck didn't overtake 'em before they got to the forks of the road."

"He could," admitted the sheriff. "They

didn't start much ahead of him, and they prob'ly wouldn't ride fast. But what difference would that make, Hartley? Buck ought to be awful tame now."

"He ought to be, Sheriff; but will he? If he tells the rest of his gang—how will they take it?"

"Yuh mean—they was in on it with him?"

"One man never stole all them cows alone, that's a cinch."

"That's right. But only Tin-Ear. Lee Wells worked over in the desert country all last winter, and the half-breed trapped for a livin'."

"They're all good friends," laughed Hashknife. "Suppose we go down and see how Bill Noon is comin' along."

"Might be a good scheme," agreed the sheriff. "Let's do it."

"And you stay here, Sleepy," advised Hashknife. "I'm just a little leery of that 7R gang, and if they show up I want to know it."

"I'm glad somethin' bothers yuh," said Sleepy. "I'll watch for 'em."

Bill Noon was sitting up in bed, bolstered against some pillows, when the doctor ushered them in. Jack Noon and Aunt Jimmy were there, sitting close to the bed. Bill had shrunk visibly in weight and he looked pale and worried, but smiled at Hashknife and the sheriff.

"How are yuh feelin', Bill?" asked Hashknife.

"Better," said Bill weakly. He looked at the sheriff. "Erway, I've heard what they're chargin' me with," he said slowly.

The little sheriff shifted his feet nervously.

"Well, I'll tell yuh, Bill, it's thisaway; I—uh—say, why don'tcha tell what yuh know? Nobody has heard from you on the subject."

"Yuh won't believe it," Bill shook his head wearily. "I don't know a thing, except that I thought I heard two shots. I rode around the turn this side of the ford, and I could see the stage in the road, with the team kinda jackknifed.

"I didn't see anybody, except the driver, and he was kinda bent over. I wondered what was the matter; so I rode ahead and was almost to the stage, when I felt somethin' hit me. It was just like when yuh fall down and hit yore head—kinda see a lot of sparks. And that's all I know about it."

Bill stopped and looked from face to face, as though wondering if anybody believed his story.

"I knew he didn't know a thing about it," said Aunt Jimmy.

The sheriff cleared his throat and looked sidewise at Hashknife, who was rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

"If yuh—if yuh can make a jury believe that, Bill," he said softly.

"I'll try," said Bill simply. "Anyway, it's true. Why, I wouldn't harm Frank Neilan. My ——, I'd as soon think of hurtin' my own father."

"I'll betcha that's true," said Hashknife, and the sheriff looked queerly at him. Hashknife reached inside his vest and drew out the bill of sale, as he turned to old Jack Noon.

"Noon, I'm goin' to ask yuh not to question me about this. I promised not to tell, and I'm askin' you not to tell. Can I depend on yuh?"

The old man looked at Hashknife wonderingly. His eyes shifted to the sheet of paper for a moment.

"Well, I—I dunno," he said slowly. "I dunno what it is yuh want me to keep quiet about, but if it's anythin' that's on the square, I'll shore keep quiet."

Hashknife handed him the paper, which the old man held close to the lamp, squinting his old eyes, his lips moving, as he read it through. Then his hand slowly dropped to his lap and he stared at Hashknife.

"Don't ask," warned Hashknife, as the questions trembled on the old man's lips. "You promised, yuh know."

"I—I know."

The old man leaned back weakly. It was a mighty effort to overcome the desire to ask at least one question, but he shut his lips tightly and put the note in his pocket.

Aunt Jimmy put her hand on his arm, as if asking him what it was all about, but he shook his head at her. The doctor left the room in response to a knock on the front door, and was back in a few moments with Mazie Neilan.

She came slowly into the room, looking from face to face, and stopped just inside the doorway.

"Oh, I didn't know there was so much company," she said.

"There's always room for you, my dear," said Aunt Jimmy, getting to her feet and going to the girl.

"No, please sit down," said the girl. "I can't stay long."

Bill Noon was watching her closely, and

Hashknife saw his eyes cloud with pain. But he tried to smile at her.

"Bill is goin' to get well," said Aunt Jimmy. "The doctor says he'll be out of here in two weeks more."

Mazie looked at Bill and their eyes met squarely.

"I'm going away tomorrow," said Mazie softly. "Mr. Cooper is going to take over the stage line business."

"Goin' away, Mazie?" It was Aunt Jimmy.

The girl nodded, but did not look at Bill.

"Yes," she said, "I'm going to Omaha. My uncle wants me to come down there and live. I wired him when—" she hesitated for a moment, here eyes staring painfully.

Bill had turned his head and was staring at the wall, his hands clenched in the covers.

"And I thought it would be better all the way around," said the girl.

Hashknife turned away and stepped to the doorway, motioning for the sheriff to follow him. They stopped just outside the front door.

SOME one was hurrying toward the house, judging from the splashing of footsteps. It was Sleepy Stevens, and he almost ran into them in his haste.

"The 7R outfit came," he panted. "Their broncs are tied to a hitch-rack at that empty saloon down the street. They were all in front of the Tom-Tom when I left, but they didn't see me. I took a look at their horses and every man is packin' a Winchester on his saddle, and they've got their saddle-rolls with 'em."

Hashknife laughed softly.

"All four of 'em, Sleepy?"

"The whole gang. Whatsa matter with the bunch, anyway? Don't they know when they've had enough?"

"It seems not. I was afraid of somethin' like this, Sheriff. They're on the prod, and things have got to be handled right, or there'll be buzzard bait a-plenty."

"Well, I dunno," said the sheriff dubiously. "Of course Buck Rahl just the same as admitted his guilt, and Tin-Ear works for him, and has worked for him a long time, but the others—"

"Don't worry about Lee Wells and the breed," said Hashknife. "They're lookin' for trouble. You didn't hear that the breed sneaked in on Neilan's girl the night before her father was killed, and that she had to out-smart him to get away, didja?"

"F'r -·— sake, no! Did he do that? C'mon!"

The little sheriff of Ghost Dance asked no more questions as they headed for the lighted street. Coming in along the Tom-Tom hitch-rack, Hashknife stopped them.

"We've got to be kinda smart," he told the sheriff. "You go bustin' in there, lookin' for trouble, and you'll get it. They're all set for us."

"Well, s'pose they are?" the sheriff rubbed the palms of his hands on his hips. "We're ready, too, ain't we?"

"I'm not," declared Hashknife. "This means more to me than just a regular gunfight. I wanted a better chance to pull my scheme, but they've forced the issue. It's pull it tonight, or lose the chance. Let's see where they are."

From out in the street they were able to see Buck Rahl and Lee Wells at the bar, backed against it, smoking. Near the door was the half-breed, standing behind some poker players, facing the door. Farther back in the room was Tin-Ear Thompson, seated on the edge of a table, smoking a cigaret and paying no attention to anybody, but facing the front door.

Hashknife studied the four men from the 7R. Other men were moving about the smoke-hazy room, laughing, talking, drinking. Hashknife led Sleepy and the sheriff away from the front of the building.

"Go around behind the building and come in the rear door," he told them. "Get in as easy as yuh can, and maybe they won't notice yuh. Watch Tin-Ear Thompson. I'll wait until I see yuh in the room before I come in."

"What'll we expect?" queried Sleepy.

"Anythin' that happens, Sleepy—maybe nothin'. Go ahead."

The two men disappeared in the dark, while Hashknife went to a front window. The half-breed left the poker table and walked over to the bar, where Rahl and Weed had turned to have a drink.

Sleepy and the sheriff came in the rear door, mixing in with the other men, and moving in fairly close to Tin-Ear Thompson. Hashknife watched them stop. As yet none of the 7R outfit had seen them.

Hashknife adjusted his holster, drew his hat down a trifle, and went striding into the

saloon, his left hand clapped over his left eye. He swerved to the left and went straight to the bar, moving in beside the half-breed, who jerked back slightly at sight of him. Buck halted a drink half-way to his lips and slowly placed it back on the bar. Wells did not move, as his eyes caught Hashknife's reflection in the bar mirror.

But Hashknife was seemingly paying no attention to them. He dug the tips of his fingers in the eye socket, his face twisted, as he peered at the mirror. Then he glanced at the half-breed.

"Lemme have yore handkerchief, Riggs," he said.

The breed shook his head quickly.

"Ain't got one," he said shortly.

Hashknife's one open eye flashed at Wells.

"Lemme have yours, Wells," he said. "Got a clod of mud in my eye."

The big ex-stage-driver reached in his hip pocket and drew out a wadded piece of cloth, which he handed to Hashknife, who took it in both hands and unfolded it. It was of cheap material, and with a blue border; the mate to the one Hashknife had found at the scene of the stage tragedy, and also a replica of the one he had found in the half-breed's cabin.

Slowly Hashknife reached in his pocket and drew out the other two. One of them was streaked with smut. Wells glanced at Hashknife's face; at the eye which was supposed to be full of mud. But that eye was looking straight at him, unblinking.

"Three of a kind, Lee," said Hashknife loud enough for every one in the room to hear. "They were cheap, so yuh bought several, I suppose."

"What in —— do you mean?" growled Weed blankly.

"Take a look at 'em," said Hashknife coldly.

The inhabitants of the room evidently sensed that something was wrong. Gone was the rattle of poker-chips, the rumble of men's voices, the scuffling of feet. They were all watching the four men at the bar.

"You know what I mean, Lee," said Hashknife calmly. "When you get drunk—you don't get drunk enough."

"What the —— does he mean?" growled Buck Rahl nervously. Buck had seen one colossal bluff made by Hashknife that day, and was suspicious now.

"I dunno what in —— he's talkin' about," declared Lee. "Gimme back that handkerchief, if yuh ain't goin' to use it."

"I'm goin' to use it," Hashknife drew back his hand. "You lost one, Wells; one you threw away. They're all alike, except that yuh used one of 'em to clean out the barrel of yore six-shooter."

Lee Wells jerked slightly and his heavy throat seemed to bulge over the edge of his black muffler. Hashknife saw his nostrils flare a little, and his breathing jerked a little.

"Search me," he said huskily. "I dunno what yuh mean."

"Don't yuh?" Hashknife's lips twisted in a grin, but his gray eyes were as hard as flint. "Didn't yuh know that Frank Neilan's gun was a .45?"

The big ex-driver swallowed heavily and his tensed lips sagged visibly. He knew what was coming. The half-breed realized that something was wrong and looked to Buck Rahl for some sign; but the boss of the 7R was scowling at Hashknife, wondering what it was all about.

"That Frank Neilan's gun was a .45?" parroted Wells.

"And that Bill Noon was shot with a .44?" queried Hashknife slowly. "And that when yuh cleaned out the barrel of yore .44 with a handkerchief and thought yuh threw the rag in the creek — it hung to a bush, you —— murderer!"

As Hashknife snapped his last word his right hand whipped the gun from the holster, and he jambed the muzzle up against the waistline of the ex-stage-driver.

THE move was so unexpected, so swift, that for a moment there was no sound. Then two revolver shots crashed out, spaced so close that it was almost as one shot.

Hashknife jerked sidewise, staggering around on one heel and going down on one knee. Wells sprang ahead, jerking out his gun, possibly thinking that Hashknife was out of the game, but the tall cowpuncher from the Bar 44 flung himself along the floor, grasping Wells around the knees, and dropping him full-length on the floor, right in the path of the half-breed, who had drawn his gun and was backing toward the door, shooting at Sleepy and the sheriff, who were both shooting fast.

The half-breed caught his heel and sat down with such force that he lost his hat,

his gun, and the desire to prolong the battle. Hashknife let go of Wells and got to his knees. The big man did not move, and they found that he had hit his temple on the leg of a chair as he fell.

Tin-Ear Thompson was doubled up on the floor beside the table where he had been sitting, one hand still clutching his gun, while Buck Rahl sagged against the bar, his hat down over his eyes, a gun in his hand, still trickling smoke.

And as Hashknife looked at him his knees sagged and he went down to a sitting position, falling as loosely as if he hadn't a bone in his body. Sleepy came slowly down the room, staring at Hashknife, his eyes wide, his mouth half-open, paying no attention to the little sheriff, who was measuring step for step with him, his gun pointing at the luckless half-breed, whose hands were in the air.

"Help me, somebody," said the sheriff, drawing two pairs of handcuffs from his pocket. There were plenty of men to help him handcuff Wells and the half-breed. Sleepy went to Hashknife and caught him by the arm, staring into Hashknife's face.

"Where did it hit yuh, pardner?" Sleepy's voice was strained.

"Huh?" Hashknife looked queerly at Sleepy. "What hit me?"

"Oh, don't talk thataway," begged Sleepy. "—— it, that Tin-Ear shot just too quick for me. Where did it hit yuh?"

"Oh, yeah," Hashknife frowned heavily. In the excitement of the battle he had forgotten the something that had knocked him sidewise. It had seemed that some one had struck him a blow in the side. He looked at Sleepy and around at the men, whose faces were slightly blurred in the smoke.

"You got hit, yuh know," whispered Sleepy.

Hashknife worked his arms and legs carefully. They seemed to be all right. But when he moved his right arm he could feel a throb of pain from his right chest. The men gathered around him, while several of them hurried down to the get the doctor.

"You got hit, that's a cinch," said one of the men. "One of them first shots hit yuh, Hartley. Didn't you see it?" The man appealed to the bartender, who shook his head.

"I was under the bar," he said unashamed. He held up a dripping sleeve. "Got my arm in my wash-tub. I didn't see anythin'."

Hashknife reached inside his vest, exploring carefully. Then he drew out a huge roll of bills, torn and twisted. He looked at them, as did the crowd, their eyes wide at sight of so much real money, and felt inside his shirt.

He shifted the money to his other hand and felt of the other side, his fingers exploring cautiously. Then his mouth parted in a wide grin and he sighed with relief.

"That's what bein' thin does for yuh," he said slowly.

"Didn't yuh get hit?" whispered Sleepy hoarsely.

"It hit into that wad of money," said Hashknife slowly. "It drove about forty dollars worth into my hide and skidded across my manly bosom. Uncle Sam sure does make tough *dinero*, folks. And while we're on the money subject, I don't mind tellin' yuh how that this money is to be divided between the Bar 44 and the Mission Cross L, to pay 'em for the cows that Buck Rahl stole from 'em last fall.

"Buck gave old man Noon a bill of sale for the five hundred he stole from him." Hashknife turned and looked at the limp figure of Buck Rahl. "I promised not to tell on him, folks; offered him a chance to make good and go straight, but he wouldn't take it."

Questions were hurled at Hashknife, but he ignored them. Lee Wells had recovered and was staring at the bracelets on his wrists. Hashknife stepped over to him.

"It's too bad, Lee," he said. "You made the usual mistake. You wanted that money on the stage, I reckon. You aimed to kill Frank Neilan and get away with that drunken idea, but Bill Noon showed up and ruined it. You knocked him off his horse and then shot him again. You made a lot of mistakes, Wells. You shot Bill Noon when he was layin' down, and you never thought of the angle the bullet would take.

"And you never stopped to think that Neilan shot a .45. He'd have a hard time shootin' Bill Noon with a .44, wouldn't he? And you had to do the best yuh could; so yuh cleaned out yore .44 with a blue-bordered handkerchief, and thought you had thrown it into the creek, where yuh threw yore empty .44 shells, but it caught on a snag and ruined it. Then Le Saint showed up and queered everythin' for yuh. I

thought for a while that the half-breed was the one, but he's too much Injun to ever carry a handkerchief. I had you cinched a long time ago, Lee, but I had to force Buck Rahl to give back what he borrowed by force last fall."

"I never kill nobody," said the half-breed flatly. "I help Buck Rahl steal cattle."

"Well, whatcha got to say, Lee?" asked the sheriff.

"Me?" Lee Wells glared malevolently at the little sheriff. "What in —— is there left for me to say? By the time that —— drop-the-handkerchief detective got through talkin' there wasn't anythin' left to say."

"But yuh might say somethin', Lee," suggested the sheriff.

"I might, eh? I suppose they'll hang me on the strength of a dirty handkerchief, eh? Well, I'm not talkin'. By ——, I heard of a feller over in Nebrasky that got off on a plea of insanity. Mebbe I'll do like he did."

"Yo're not crazy, yuh know," said the sheriff.

"The —— I ain't! Any —— man is crazy that don't kill Hartley when he's got a chance. I'll do the rest of my talkin' to a lawyer."

The sheriff took Wells and Enos Riggs outside, while several men brought horses and roped them on, while the doctor made his examination of Buck Rahl and Tin-Ear Thompson. Hashknife and Sleepy went outside, where they found Mazie Neilan on the saloon porch, trying to hear what was going on in the saloon.

"What was it?" she asked Hashknife breathlessly. "A man came after the doctor. It was something about the shooting at the stage, wasn't it?"

"Yeah," said Hashknife. "You can go back and tell Bill that he's free. Lee Wells was the man. He shot Bill. It's all right now, Mazie Neilan. Jack Noon has got all his cows back, and Bill ain't guilty, and—"

Hashknife stopped and began chuckling. The girl had whirled and was running back toward the doctor's home. They heard the horses at the hitch-rack snort, as she ran past them. From the saloon came the rumble of voices. The sheriff called to them, asking if they wanted to go back to Broken Falls.

But they didn't want to go to Broken Falls—they wanted to go home; so they mounted their weary horses and rode out of town.

"I thought yuh was badly hurt," said Sleepy wearily. "It was the worst jolt I've had in many a day. I didn't see Tin-Ear draw his gun, but I seen him lift it. The sheriff got Buck. And when I seen you fall I shot three times at that half-breed and missed him clean every time."

"Well, we got off cheap," said Hashknife. "I've heard of men gettin' hit in their bank-roll, but that's the first time it ever happened to me. Tomorrow we'll split this money between the Bar 44 and the Mission Cross L. Old Jack Noon has his share, and everybody is happy, I hope."

"And that's what yuh meant by restitution, Hashknife?"

"That's the word, Sleepy."

FOR a mile or more they slopped along over the muddy road, while a moon peered out from between the broken clouds. Then:

"What do we get out of it—except experience, Hashknife?"

"What do we get?" queried Hashknife.

His voice sounded tired. He shifted in his wet saddle and rode along for a way in silence. Somewhere a coyote, probably peevish at the old moon, lifted a protesting voice.

"Sleepy," said Hashknife softly, "didja see the expression on old Jack Noon's face when he realized that he was gettin' all his cows back?"

"Yeah, I seen it."

"And yuh saw how that girl went spinnin' back to the doctor's office?"

"Yeah."

"Well, that's what we get, Sleepy. That's our restitution—our pay for what we done today. It'll save her the price of a railroad ticket to Omaha."

"I wish," said Sleepy, "I could 'a' been in the doctor's office when she came back."

"Yo're sure hard to satisfy," said Hashknife. "I can use my imagination."

"After what happened today—I'd say yuh can," laughed Sleepy, and they plodded along over the muddy road, while the moon shone down on Ghost Dance Valley and Ghost Dance town, where three people sat at a bedside, and tried to explain to each other the things that none of them could understand.

AND Lee Wells cursed the little snag bitterly, as his horse forded Frying Pan Creek, where he had made his big mistake.

"I never thought it of you, Lee," said the sheriff, as they drew away from the ford.

"Didn't yuh?—I must 'a' been thinkin' of you then, when I didn't make sure of gettin' rid of that —— handkerchief. I thought it fell in the creek."

The moon went under a cloud, and there was only the *plop-plop-plop* of the hoofs in the mud and the soft creak of saddle leather. There was no longer a mystery in Ghost Dance Valley.

IRON MIKE

by Leonard H. Nason

THERE was quite a blow on, and I was the only passenger in the dining saloon. It was about the fifth day out, and I had managed to make friends with most of the crew, so that I knew them by name, and expected that very soon they would begin to tell me some yarns that I might sell for gold. Well, the ship rolled, and the saloon ports were green most of the time. Every once in a while the ship would hit a sea that was like a wall, and I bethought me that the steersman might ease her a bit.

"Who's at the wheel," I asked the steward. "Have they got some apprentice up there this weather?"

"No, sir," said the steward, "'Iron Mike' steers this boat. He takes her from New York to Cherbourg without a watch below. He's a husky man, but he can't meet the seas."

After dinner I sought the bridge to meet Iron Mike. It is against the law for landlubbers to go on the bridge, but then, it's a poor law that doesn't get broken once in a while. There was an officer in each wing, who paid me no heed, so I ducked into the wheel-house. Empty. How come? The wheel deserted? Then the wheel gave a spin, and a black box beside it winked a red eye at me. How come? Then I perceived Iron Mike. He was a box, and out of him went rods that turned swiftly and evenly. The wheel spun back and forth as if a ghost had the spokes. Was ever a yarn of Flying Dutchman or Monomoy wrecker as wild as this? Here was a liner of twenty hundred tons, and this box steered her. The box winked red and yellow, according as the rudder shifted from left to right. (Port and starboard are obsolete terms, gone with dandy-funk and mains'l haul.) Upon the box was a little knob for weather correction, another for drift, another for something else. A long gray comber shouldered the liner two points off her course, and Iron Mike deftly brought her back again, purring with satisfaction, and blinking his red eye. Inside the wheel-house were all kinds of dials and indicators, the number of revolutions each propeller made, the actual position of the rudder, a machine that brought a sample of air from every compartment of the ship, so that any smoke in said air could be seen at once, the old binnacle and the new gyro-compass, bells, speaking tubes, and a fire-alarm that rang if the temperature in any stateroom went above eighty degrees—all these things were there, and no one to watch out but Iron Mike.

What if Mike let the ship wander off her course? Ah, at either end of the bridge was a watch officer, who kept his eye bent upon a compass that he had before him. Should the ship fall away from her course these officers, either one or both, would step into the chart-house, but not to poke Iron Mike in the jaw, nor cave in several of his ribs, as in the good old days when a man kept his eye on the weather-royal, and let the ship yaw. No indeed, the officers would step nimbly up to Mike, wiggle a wheel or two, give him a shot of cylinder oil by way of grog, and go back to their post on the bridge again, certain that Mike had seen the error of his ways, and would hold the ship well and truly to her course thereafter.

Post Palaver

by Georges Surdez

Author of "Red Shadow," "Ace of Spades," etc.

PIERRE GODARD, in fifteen years campaigning with the French Colonial Infantry, had attained the rank of sergeant, no more. Others earned promotion and decorations. He found fever and wounds. He was tall, strong and courageous, eager to distinguish himself, but luck never broke right for him. When he was appointed to the Military Post of Konoka, in the Northern Ivory Coast, and placed in command of twenty-five *tirailleurs*, he saw a ray of hope.

Then Lieutenant Chabrol came.

Chabrol was young, newly promoted, and on his first lonely post. It must be admitted that Konoka was lonely. The outer walls of the post, made of bricks baked in the sun, surrounded several buildings, the quarters of the white men, roofed with sheet iron. In one angle stood the blockhouse, roomy enough to hold the entire garrison in an emergency, walls loopholed. On the ground floor of the blockhouse were the storerooms and the jail. The dwellings of the *tirailleurs*, occupying the eastern face of the enclosure, were not very different from the huts of the native village near the post, wood and mud structures with tall, conical roofs of straw. Erected in a clearing of the tropical forest, many miles north of Thiassale, it covered the meeting point of several trails, hence the name, Village on the Roads.

Chabrol took solitude seriously, and drank too much. This was not Godard's first experience with a drunken superior, but he was determined that it would be his last. Alone in his room, he stared at the wall thoughtfully, tried to console himself with the knowledge that within three months he would be sailing for France. He would retire on a pension. A civilian once more, perhaps his ill-luck would not follow him in some private enterprize.

Nevertheless, his habits, those of the veteran soldier, were being constantly offended by Chabrol. An officer should keep up certain standards of dress and behavior. He should not pitch empty bottles at the servant's head, or joke with the privates when not quite sober.

A tall shadow in the door caused Godard to glance up. Sidibe, the black corporal, had come quietly. His rugged face was grave, his thick lips pursed in a dissatisfied pout.

"What?" Godard asked impatiently.

"Lieutenant wants to see thee." Sidibe hooked a long thumb over his shoulder, toward the lighted veranda across the yard.

"All right."

Godard rose wearily. This was not the first time Chabrol sent for him late at night.

He found the officer sprawled in a chair, eyes half shut, facing a tall bottle and a full glass.

"Approach, Sergeant Godard!" Chabrol ordered jovially. "Salute, sit down—and have a drink."

Godard sat down and accepted the glass offered him by the alert boy. A native boy is usually sluggish, but dodging bottles had quickened this one.

"Old man," Chabrol opened, "we're plunged in mystery."

He lowered his voice to a confidential whisper:

"You see this bottle? It's empty, and I haven't touched it."

Godard picked up the bottle; an expensive wine, judging by the label. The tinfoil cap came off easily. The cork was intact, but the liquid was gone.

"Old trick, Lieutenant. Some fellow stuck two small pieces of wood, the size of toothpicks, on either side of the cork, let the wine leak out. Then he took the sticks out, and the cork swelled back tightly.

"Good lad, Godard. Knows everything!" Chabrol wiped his eyes with the back of one hand. "Vintage wine sliding down the gullet of a savage! Listen, model of all —— non-coms that you are, see that the wine is kept sacred. This place is bad enough with wine. Without wine——"

"I'll be careful," Godard promised.

"Fine. Finish your glass and go to bed."

Godard left, raging inwardly. Two or three times a week, Chabrol disturbed him late at night for some such petty affair, and took the occasion to shower him with amiable curses. It was his way. Discipline at the post was non-existent. The native troopers knew that punishment would be limited to a paternal scolding from the young officer.

"Glad it's over for tonight," Godard grumbled as he undressed and went to bed.

He was mistaken. It was perhaps three in the morning when he was awakened by shots. He leaped up, drew on trousers, thrust his feet into sandals and ran out to investigate.

He found Chabrol, completely nude, emptying his revolver into a tree.

"What's wrong, Lieutenant?"

"Vampire-bat up there. Yelling all night. Can't sleep. Must kill it."

"That's an owl! It won't hurt you—" Godard protested.

"Tell you it's a big bat," the lieutenant insisted. "Can't go to bed without shooting it."

The uproar had brought out the *tirailleurs* and their families. They gathered close to the two white men, and Godard was intensely humiliated. No one could mistake the officer's condition.

"Will you go to bed if I kill it?" Godard asked.

"Sure. Just don't want my blood sucked."

Godard sent for his shotgun, and dropped the inoffensive owl.

"Told you it was a vampire," Chabrol clamored.

The sergeant signaled to Sidibe, and they assisted Chabrol to his room, put him in bed. Godard brought the sheets close to the younger man's chin.

"A mother, that's what you are," Chabrol blubbered.

"Have your boy clean your feet in the morning," Godard advised. "You'll have *jiggers* from walking barefooted in the yard."

Chabrol clung to his hand desperately.

"Don't go, old man, you —— fool!" he begged. "Sing me to sleep. You're my mother."

Godard drew a chair near the bed, sat down.

"What song do you want?" he asked patiently.

"The school song—the one that goes—" Chabrol hummed.

The lieutenant appeared so young, so pitiful, with his wisp of a mustache and soft blue eyes, Godard sang—

> "It's a beautiful regiment passing,
> Drums beating and bugles ringing."

"Louder, Godard. Keep time with your feet!"

Godard sang louder, and kept time with his feet.

Finally, Chabrol's grip on his wrist relaxed, his head sank on the pillow. Godard tiptoed from the room.

"Hope he passes out from it," he muttered.

Then he located the boy, shook him awake.

"Black coffee ready in the morning when Lieutenant wakes, savvy?"

"Yessah."

HALF angry, half laughing, Godard went back to bed.

The obvious course was to report Chabrol.

Captain Previl, in Thiassale, was a just man. He would investigate quietly, and discover the whole truth if given a hint. Although the region of Konoka was officially pacified, Chabrol's sin amounted to drunkenness before the enemy. Godard's strict duty was to report. Yet he could not bring himself to do it. It was this excessive consideration for others, he had been told, that had always held him back.

He hoped that active service would change the lieutenant. And active service could be expected any time.

The natives, of various tribes, were of the Baoule group. Neither Christian missionaries nor preachers of Islam had been able to shake their faith in the ancestral cult, fetish-worship. They were on the average of short stature and did not seem very formidable foes.

Godard knew better. He had done patrol work in the bush during the last rebellion, and knew that they were not to be despised. War against them was a war of ambush, of shots that came out of the undergrowth, of a man dropped, with a load of assorted rusty nails and cast iron in the small of his back. A war of sweating, panting rushes through high grass, tripping over protruding roots, of ineffective burning of villages from which the inhabitants had fled.

White men were the principal targets in those skirmishes. Godard had seen more than one patrol of native soldiers bringing in the limp, white garbed form of a European leader, the faded gold braid on the sleeves swinging near the ground.

There was hope that Chabrol, when faced by such grim business, would have no need of drink to occupy his mind. He would know the hesitating steps through the bush, the tenseness while waiting for the first shot to come, the feel of his heart thumping within his chest when the wind rustled the tree branches.

A few days later, the lieutenant again sent for Godard.

"I have a letter from Thiassale," he announced. "The Baoules seem unwilling to pay taxes; they also protest against the requisition of bearers made by civil officials on inspection tours. Did you see signs of unrest, Sergeant?"

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"Captain Previl thinks that matters will take a serious turn."

"I wouldn't be surprized," Godard agreed. "There's been a lot of tom-toming and shouting going on in the villages."

"The captain also tells me to keep an eye open for Charley Akana, whoever he is. Do you know?"

"Yes."

"Who is he, what's his game?"

"He is a Baoule, and a trouble maker. It's a long story."

"Go ahead."

"Akana was born forty miles from here, in a village by the Bandama River. When very young, he ran away and took service as boy with a white man. Later, he was a cook, a clerk. He followed one of his masters to Liberia. In Monrovia, he was converted to the Christian faith. Somehow, he reached Sierra Leone, then Liverpool. He imbibed a lot of modern ideas, and came back to the Ivory Coast with a new religion, of his own creation. He includes the old fetish rites. His teachings would make us laugh, but they impress the blacks. After an absence of twenty years, he reappeared at his home village. He had the prestige of travel, and had not forgotten his mother tongue. He made speeches, and soon after, trouble started. An officer was murdered, another severely wounded, from ambush. Akana was arrested, and invited to leave. There was no actual proof against him. Nevertheless, he was warned that if he ever showed himself north of the fork of the Bandama and N'Zi rivers, his life would be worth nothing."

"Did you ever see him, Godard?"

"Once, when he was brought into Thiassale. Common sort of a fellow, no different from any Baoule."

"He's in this region again," Chabrol announced.

"Where?"

"He was seen by informers near the Post of Shikaka. Since then, several attacks have been made on the *tirailleurs*. Captain Previl believes he has come this way."

"And we are to arrest him?"

"If we can find him," Chabrol agreed. "Can you suggest anything?"

"There is no use looking for him ourselves. He'd hide. But in the village near this post there are several traders, who go everywhere freely. They're not real Baoules, but half Dioula, and Mohammedans. They'll give us information for money."

"Call them."

Four of the traders were in the village. They came immediately. They were lanky, grave negroes, more sophisticated than the rest of the population. Godard explained what he desired in a few words. They assented readily to bring news, for they wished to avoid war. Perturbed conditions were not good for commerce. They would listen to the conversations in the villages, and were sure they could locate Akana, if the preacher was in the vicinity.

Godard was about to follow them when they departed. Chabrol called him back.

"I made a fool of myself the other night," he remarked.

"I didn't care. But the *tirailleurs*—"

"I know. But what I wish to say—"

"Lieutenant," Godard interrupted him impulsively, "I have seen older men than you try to pull through on drink up bush. You just had to find out it couldn't be done."

Chabrol seemed cured. For a week, Godard did not see him even suspiciously elated.

There was a steely quality in the officer when he was himself. He grasped the reins with a strong hand, and the *tirailleurs* soon felt that they had a chief, for the first time in several months. Godard rejoiced that he had not reported him. Chabrol had simply been undergoing the unavoidable transition from French life to the existence of the tropics. But while all was well within the post, there was noticeable restlessness outside among the natives.

Before a young man can take his place in his village as a full-fledged citizen, he must spend several months in the forest, learning the lore of his tribe, going through an initiation. It is at this time that the situation becomes tense, for the youths are eager to prove that they are valorous warriors.

Advised by Godard, Chabrol visited the villages, spoke to the chiefs. He was escorted by two soldiers only, to prove that he trusted his hosts. It was evident that the lieutenant was becoming interested in his work and was enjoying the long tramps on the trails.

Godard came to the conclusion that the reported presence of Akana in the region had been based on the hasty report of some frightened official, seeking to blame the unrest of his native charges on anything except himself. The traders had reported nothing of the elusive preacher.

ONE evening, as the sergeant was preparing for sleep, Sidibe entered noiselessly, as always.

"What?" Godard asked.

"Man wants see thee," Sidibe replied, with his favorite gesture, thumb hooked over one shoulder.

"Bring him in."

It was one of the traders.

"What dost thou wish?"

"I savvy where Akana is, Sergeant."

Godard, immediately alert, relaced his boots.

"Near here?"

"Not far. The young men have gone to listen to his words tonight. Thou dost know where the trail that passes the three palms near the running water meets another trail? Where there is a place where palm-wine is gathered? He will talk there, when the moon rises."

"Sure?"

"Yes. There was talk of nothing else all day in the village."

"All right. Tomorrow the money is thine."

Godard buckled his belt over the tunic, assured himself that his rifle was loaded. Glancing across the yard, he saw a light in the lieutenant's quarters. He ran across the yard, so eager was he to tell the news.

Chabrol was not in the office, was not in that section of the veranda which he used as dining-room.

"Lieutenant?"

A muffled answer came from within the bedroom. There was the sound of dragging footsteps across the floor, and Chabrol emerged into the light. He was disheveled, red-faced. He kept his eyes open only with evident effort.

"What is it, Sergeant?" he asked, thickly.

"Akana is located."

"Akana—Akana—"

Fierce resentment surged in Godard. Here he was, at thirty-three, sober, strong, under the orders of a kid, ten years younger, who did not have sense enough to hold his drink gracefully.

"Charley Akana—don't you remember?"

"Yes. What about him?"

"He's near. I am going after him."

Chabrol came forward, staggering so that he had to grasp the back of a chair.

"I'm in command—dangerous—I must go too."

"No need. I'll take four men. That's all that's wanted for the job, unless you want the whole mob on your hands."

"Duty—must go—" Chabrol insisted.

Godard was at the end of his patience. He forgot discipline, for the first time in fifteen years.

"You're not fit to go, Lieutenant."

"What's wrong with me?"

"You're drunk."

"Can't be drunk," Chabrol replied.

"What's the matter with you, then?" Godard wondered sarcastically.

"Sick—very sick—but I can go—"

"No. It's better—"

"Enough," Chabrol cut short. "What I say goes."

He drew himself up, and entered his room, swaying. Godard followed, pleading:

"Lieutenant, you'll make as much noise as a horse—"

Chabrol lurched to the bed, reached for his trousers.

"I'll be quiet."

He somehow struggled into his garments, and fastened his boots with clumsy fingers.

If Akana was not captured tonight, Godard felt, he would not be for months, not until after the rebellion that he was organizing had been repressed by a strong column of troops and many men killed. Was there no occasion when disobedience was justified? There was, and the occasion was now. Godard carefully braced his rifle against the wall. He was nervous, for laying hands on a superior amounted to mutiny.

"Lieutenant, you stay here," he said resolutely. "You're a nice kid, but this is no time to play at soldiers."

Chabrol looked up indignantly.

"You give me—orders?"

Godard, burning his bridges behind him, grasped the lieutenant by the shoulders, and pushed him back upon the bed.

"Easy now," he urged. "Lie still. Sleep it off."

Chabrol drove a fist against his face.

"Court martial—"

"All that, Lieutenant. But first let me fetch Akana!"

Chabrol fought, but Godard was surprized to find so little vigor in the athletic officer's blows. Decidedly, men were not what they were once.

Panting, Chabrol lay on the bed, unable to shake off the non-com's weight.

"Promise to behave or I'll tie you!"

"Let me go—"

Godard looked around for something to fasten the officer's hands. The best he could find was a towel. He released the young man and reached for the cloth.

With a sudden twist, Chabrol freed himself completely, was near the rifle. He brought the muzzle to bear on Godard's chest.

"Back up, you ——!" he invited.

Before Godard's eyes, the tiny muzzle wavered. Looking into the black hole, the sergeant thought he could see long columns of men winding along the trails, blood-stained figures in white carried away, lifeless. He could see the smoke rising from the villages, while in his ears echoed the fighting scream of the *tirailleurs* unleashed. All that because of a drunken man!

He knocked the barrel aside, and his right fist circled, in a long, smashing blow that halted with a sharp impact on the young officer's chin.

The rifle clattered to the floor, and Chabrol slumped forward. His head struck the planking with a dull sound. Godard, the dew from his forehead dripping upon his cheeks, stood still for a long minute, looking down at the still figure. Fifteen years of discipline, a spotless record—then this.

He glanced about him quickly. No one had seen.

Godard picked the officer in his arms, stretched him upon the bed.

"Might as well make sure he won't do anything foolish when he comes to," Godard thought. He tore the towel into strips, bound wrists and ankles. To prevent a call for help, he fastened another towel, taken from an open trunk, so that it covered the mouth. When certain that Chabrol was unable to move, he extinguished the lamp, shut the wooden blinds and the door.

On the veranda, he called for the boy.

"Have black coffee ready for Lieutenant in the morning. If I am not here by daylight, awake him, go in his room."

"Yessah."

Sidibe was waiting near the barracks.

"Take charge until morning," Godard ordered. "Give me four good men."

The corporal picked out four *tirailleurs*, veterans of the Sudan and expert hunters.

"You boys savvy quiet, eh?" Godard asked. He informed them of their destination. They understood.

The gate closed behind them. Godard had estimated the distance as somewhat over ten miles, or four hours' travel, at night and on poor trails.

The *tirailleur* who took the lead was the best hunter in the post, and prowling at night was an old habit with him. He sensed obstacles in the dark, and cautioned Godard when there was need of particular care.

Several times he took short cuts, under the bushes, where Godard had to crawl on

hands and knees. During these moments, the sergeant suffered agony, for he feared snakes above all else. But if the negroes, almost completely naked, had no terror of horned vipers and biting insects, why should he, who wore clothing and thick boots. That was the voice of reason, but the voice of instinct was strong also.

Gradually, new sounds penetrated his consiousness, faint echoes of cries and singing, then the beat of a tom-tom, of several tom-toms. It was a gala affair to which Godard was inviting himself. If the Baoules had consumed enough palm-wine and trade gin, there would be a few very interesting minutes when he appeared. In fact, he was likely to be annoyed by drink at both ends of his journey, and was almost resolved never to stare a decanter in the face again.

Godard was growing nervous. Not that he wished to turn back. He was simply aware that he was engaging himself deeply. Five Gras rifles could demolish quite a few Baoules in a very few seconds, but at short range a flintlock was very effective, and the negroes had many flintlocks.

A whispered inquiry came out of the dark, followed by the solid impact of a gun butt against a hard skull. The *tirailleur* in the lead had given the only password he knew. Godard stepped over the prone Baoule, and left him to the tender hands of the soldiers following him. There was a time to be humane, but that time was not at two in the morning, a short distance from hostile natives.

The sky was red with the reflection of flames, and the yells and drumming were deafening. Judging by sounds, Charley Akana was not an enemy of joy and old customs.

Through the last row of bushes before reaching the clearing, Godard could see the conical straw roofs of a few huts, and hundreds of leaping figures. Guns were flung high in the air, caught again. Inside the first ring of dancers, which was quite large, danced a smaller ring, composed of witch-doctors, sorcerers. These wore huge masks of painted wood, to which were fastened long horns.

After a few minutes' inspection, Godard finally spied a man, dressed in European garments, wearing a sun helmet. He was seated by a fire, watching, and waving his hand in time to the barbaric music, while an indulgent smile played on his lips.

The sergeant knew him at once. Akana, whom he had seen long ago at Thiassale, the man who had received warning to keep away from the High Country.

He shouldered his rifle, and the red glow of the flames ran down the barrel, outlined the sights. Then, he had these sights in line with the negro's forehead. A pressure of the finger, and all would be settled.

But shooting from ambush is not a white man's game, when there is another method of dealing with blacks, a method which other men had employed before Godard. It worked sometimes, and had been known to fail.

He addressed the *tirailleurs*.

"I am going out there. Don't fire until they strike me."

They did not protest. Possibly, they thought him mad, but he was a white man, and as such entitled to be allowed to go mad if he wished.

Godard passed the strap of his rifle over one shoulder, and walked into the light, hands in his pockets, toward the dancers.

THEY did not notice him until he was close, then not soon enough to stop their exuberant steps. He motioned with his chin that he wanted to pass, and the first ring opened before him, closed behind him. Still striding slowly, although the tom-toms were suddenly silent and a hush had come over the clearing, the sergeant reached the ring of sorcerers, again indicated his desire to pass. They too parted to let him through.

He stood five feet from Akana, who was too surprized to stir.

"Charley, I have come to take thee back to Thiassale," he said, in French. "There are many rifles aimed at thy homely mug, in the bush."

Akana rose, so frightened by the unexpected appearance of the white soldier that he reeled. Hundreds of eyes were upon him, waiting for the signal of attack, for a gesture to back his bold speeches.

If he claimed the Frenchman's life, he lost his own. He must have known that he would not live long after reaching Thiassale, where he would have to answer for conspiring to murder. Yet he clung to the last few days of life, the last few hours, was unwilling to exchange a life for a life.

"I'll come," he replied, in French.

"I knew it," Godard assured him, "for I was told that when thou wert a servant, thou wert meek and obedient."

He dropped into the dialect of the men around him:

"Akana is coming with me. He says that you all must keep the peace. Is that not so, Akana?"

Akana stood, trembling, for a long moment.

"The white man speaks the truth," he said at last.

"Let the dancing go on," Godard suggested. "It is good for young men to do as their fathers have done before, when they come to the man age. Let them listen to the wise old men and in their turn become wise."

He turned to Akana—

"Come on, Charley."

The captive, no longer Akana, preacher of rebellion, but again Charley, house-boy, followed.

The sergeant locked Akana in the blockhouse. Two precautions are better than one. He placed an armed *tirailleur* in the cell, while another paced before the door.

Godard knew that Chabrol would not be in the best of moods, but he had to face him sometime, and it was best to get the first interview over with. He opened the door of the bedroom, looked in. The young man was on the bed, just as he had left him.

Godard cut the improvised cords, unwound the towel and uncovered the lieutenant's lips. Chabrol remained still, though his eyes were wide open.

"Hello," Godard greeted, speaking with more confidence than he really felt.

"Go away, go away," Chabrol whispered huskily.

"He needs a drink to bring him around," Godard thought.

From the veranda he saw the boy, squatted by the cook's shack, for it was now broad daylight. The lad answered immediately, shuffled toward the bungalow.

"Bring me a glass of wine," the sergeant asked.

The boy extended his hand, spoke but one word—

"Key."

"Never mind going for a new bottle," Godard said with impatience. "Any bottle will do."

"No bottle in lieutenant's place," the boy protested.

"Did he finish everything last night?"

"No drink last night. No drink this place for long time."

Godard grasped the young negro by the arm.

"How long?"

"Last time was night bird was killed."

The boy spoke the truth, as far as he knew. Godard scratched his head thoughtfully. Chabrol had been quite drunk the night before. If not on wine, on what? He searched the cupboards, everywhere. No sign of drink, no bottles. Where were the "dead soldiers" of last night's spree.

"Never mind, boy—"

Puzzled, he went back to Chabrol, found him seated on the bed, still staring into space.

"Come on," he begged, with anxiety in his voice, "what's the matter with you?"

"I'm finding them," Chabrol spoke weakly. "They call themselves postmen, but they bring no news!"

As he spoke, he groped with tense fingers over the sheets.

Godard felt his pulse, ran his hand over the chest, paying no attention to Chabrol's feeble efforts to push him away.

The officer had fever.

When Godard had believed him drunk, he had been suffering with fever, last night. He had been feverish when Godard had struck him. In that light, his attempt to dress and do his duty had been heroic.

The sergeant feared that the uncomfortable night spent tied up and unattended might result fatally. And if Chabrol died, how would Godard square himself with his conscience, although no one had seen? He went to the tiny bookcase in the office, found the book, written especially for "The Commanders of Post having no Physician."

Perhaps he could pull Chabrol through until the doctor from Thiassale arrived, by following instructions. He dispatched a messenger, bearing the news of Akana's capture and the plea that the military physician be sent at once to Konoka. Two days for the messenger to reach Thiassale, two days for the doctor to come, four days, more than enough time for Charbol to die. At this advanced stage of fever, quinine absorbed through the stomach would have no time to act. The book ordered the injection of a quinine solution.

Godard went to work resolutely, although

he knew the danger of an inexpertly wielded hypodermic needle. He sterilized the instrument, compounded the solution from the first-aid chest. Sidibe held the lieutenant. Then Godard, who had longed to speak to his chief and advise him not to use wine so freely, was compelled to argue with the sick man to make him swallow champagne, suggested by the book.

He had four long days of anxiety, during which Chabrol, save for an occasional lucid spell, was incoherently calling for his relatives, thousands of miles away.

On the fifth morning, the doctor arrived at Konoka, accompanied by Captain Previl and a half company of *tirailleurs*. While the physician was taking care of Chabrol, Previl questioned the sergeant.

"Tell me all about it," he invited. "The man responsible for the capture of Akana won't be disliked at headquarters!"

Godard knew it. It was his chance, his big chance. After all, it was he who had managed the arrest, he who had risked his skin. Chabrol had done nothing save hinder. And even if the lieutenant spoke of Godard's mutiny, all would believe him the victim of fever delusion.

He gave a brief account of his trip and safe return.

"Lieutenant Chabrol was not with you?"

"No, Captain. He was already ill at the time."

"Did he give you the order to make the arrest?"

Previl's keen gray eyes were fastened on Godard's face.

Chabrol was the commander, and it was his duty to give orders, whether suffering from fever or not. Godard knew that if he said that he had acted upon orders, his reward would not be so great. There is a vast difference between obeying and showing initiative. But Godard could not bring himself to take all credit from the young man.

"The lieutenant gave me the order to go," he lied calmly.

Previl lighted a cigaret, smiled.

"Fine plan for a beginner. Most new men would have gone forth with the entire garrison, started a fight. Military blood counts after all; Chabrol is a soldier's son."

Godard saw his chance of promotion swiftly receding.

"By the way," Previl questioned, after smoking silently for a space, "did Lieutenant Chabrol behave queerly when he had just arrived?"

"Not that I noticed," Godard again lied. What was the use of accusing Chabrol now?

"I feared he might go to extremes," Previl said. "Had I not known you to be a dependable man, I would have written you to be patient with him, watch him a bit. But I knew that you'd do it without being asked. You see—when young Chabrol left Thiassale for Konoka, he was in no condition to isolate himself. I told him, but he would not listen."

"What was wrong, Captain?"

"He had a brother in the artillery. Went to say good-by to him. On that very day, a shell went out the wrong way, and Chabrol's brother was mangled, and died. Chabrol saw it." Previl shrugged: "Not exactly the best memory to take away up bush, where there's much time for brooding."

Godard paled.

"How long have you served, Godard?"

"Fifteen years."

"Always as truthful in your reports as in this case?"

"Captain?" Godard exclaimed, startled.

"A while ago, Lieutenant Chabrol wrote to me. He wanted to throw up his commission. I intend to speak to him, and convince him that a poor start is not a whole race. He speaks rather highly of you. Says you were the real commander up here."

Godard passed from white to red. Before he could speak, the doctor came out of Chabrol's room, smiling.

"There was no need of me. You did fine, Sergeant."

"I read the book—"

"Always keep to the book, Godard!" the doctor located what he sought in his kit, and added, before going back to Chabrol's side: "Your chief must have had quite a time of it, delirious, eh? His face is bruised from falls."

So, Godard noted, Chabrol was still covering him. He waited until the doctor had gone, and addressed Previl.

"You trusted me to take care of him, Captain? You know what I did to the kid?"

"Take your time, Godard. Don't talk too much too soon!" the captain warned him.

"If Lieutenant Chabrol can tell the truth about himself, so can I," Godard insisted. He related what had occured at Konoka since the arrival of Chabrol, revealed his

actions on the night preceding the arrest of Akana without faltering, speaking as he would speak before the court martial. Previl heard him out.

"You know what striking an officer entails?" he questioned.

"I do. I offer no excuse, save that I believed myself facing a drunkard, not a sick man."

"What would you have done, had you known he had fever? Obeyed?"

"No," Godard replied, after a pause.

"And when he threatened you with the rifle?"

Again, Godard waited before answering. What would he have done?

"I would have thought of the others concerned—and struck, Captain."

"Three months ago," Previl stated, "Chabrol recommended you for the Infantry School, to get your commission."

Bad luck again, Godard's bad luck, proverbial among his comrades. The way had been open for him, and he had not had the intelligence to see.

"Next time you come out here," Previl went on, "you'll be a sub-lieutenant. Perhaps not brilliant, when you recall that Bonaparte was a general when some ten years younger, but a good start; and once started, you'll catch up with the procession swiftly."

Godard, dazed, tried to understand. Fifteen years of faithful service without reward, and his first act against discipline brought him what he had tried to earn.

"I believe that you'll get the cross for taking Akana," Previl said. "You did the right thing throughout. Yet, I would not boast about it everywhere. Suppose we state it this way: The post commander being sick, you took charge and captured Akana. There is no lie in that."

"Nor the whole truth," Godard protested.

"The rest," Previl retorted impatiently, "is post palaver, and has no place in an official report." He smiled, to soften his first tone of irritation—

"Do you begin to understand, Godard?"

The sergeant nodded.

"I think I do, Captain."

THE LACANDONES OF PETEN

***by* Eugene Cunningham**

LEAST important, numerically, of the population of "Mysterious Peten," the wild, northernmost department of Guatemala, are the Lacandones, the *barbaros*, or "wild" Indians. Yet these, because of their primitive mode of life, when other Indians have assumed a semblance of civilization, are perhaps the most interesting of Guatemalan people.

A settlement of boundaries between Mexico and Guatemala automatically moved most of the Lacandones into the Mexican state of Chiapas, but in Peten the region between the rivers Lacandon and Usumacinta—Aztec "Usu-mat-sint-la" or "Place of the Monkeys"—is their homeland. Here they are credited, by government officials not overly anxious to brave the wilds of Peten, with maintaining their "independence" without that savagery and hostility to Mayan and Criollo (creole) neighbors they demonstrated in ancient times. The greater part of them—again on the testimony of officials who have never seen a *barbaro*—have entirely embraced Christianity and abandoned barbaric customs.

Actually, they live hidden away in the deep forests between the Lacandon and Usumacinta, cultivating tiny patches of corn and beans and plantains and sugarcane, supplementing their *tortillas y frijoles* diet with roots and the game and fish they spend most of their time hunting. They are most dextrous with the great bows, which are almost their only weapon. Like most of the other Indians of Peten, their clothing is simple—a long, sometimes sleeveless, shirt. They speak a patois of the Mayan tongue.

Either as a separate rite, some left-handed pacification of the old gods, or as adjunct to their peculiar Christianity, they worship rude earthen images. The high lights of their monotonous lives come with *fiestas* to these images, when the honey of wild bees, brewed into a kickful mead, is swilled in enormous quantities, while balsam-incense burns before the idols. These *fiestas* last as long as there is mead—wild orgies which sometimes end in bloodshed.

Where the Law Ends

by Lewis J. Rendel

Author of "Seeing It Through," "Mirage of Madness, etc.

IT HAD come suddenly, as such things are apt to, if they come at all. Two strokes of the paddle had made all the difference. The two strokes which sent the canoe round the bend to face that shanty boat and its tragic contents.

For hours Young had known that he was lost. Hours of fruitless nosing in and out, hoping that each new water-lead would prove to be the main current of Bayou Dark. But each had only drawn him more deeply into that tangle of cypress, canebrake and dwarf palmetto. Now the falling dusk brought an added sense of savage emptiness.

Flexing his aching fingers, he bent again to the paddle.

"Perhaps," he thought with a grim amusement, "this is why they all told me to be careful down South."

He fumbled his pockets for a comforting cigaret. In the match flare he showed as a man of wiry middle height, somewhere in the early thirties, but with already the beginnings of a student's stoop. His small-featured face, still pale from the North, was marked by that rather cut-and-dried keenness which sooner or later seems to overtake the college professor. A woman would have known him instantly for a bachelor. He had the look of one who still rides those ideal hobby-horses which a successful wife would long ago have locked in some safe stable.

Just then he had a look of anger, also. To one accustomed to lead crowded classes across the morasses of human thought, there was an insult in being thus baffled by raw nature. But man-made tangles of mind have always a motive, a center and a clue, while this Louisiana swamp was a sheer wantonness of slime and monstrous vegetation, a maze without exit or plan.

Then that shot cracked open his ears, jarring the lighted match from his fingers. With its extinction, the darkness rushed back, bringing vague fear. That gun-shot from the midst of these solitudes was as sinister as footsteps in a supposedly empty house.

Young laughed at his own nerves. It was only some negro hunting alligators. A shot meant humanity, and that was what he most needed just then. A couple of strokes sent him round the bend. There was a darker shape hugged in among the reeds, showing two oblongs of yellow light. It was plainly some kind of a shanty boat, and he made for it. The canoe slid silently to the door of the shack built upon the low, scow hull. Steadying himself by a hand on its weathered side, Young stood up and looked in.

A lamp, flaring in a cracked chimney, showed a bare floor, a chipped chair or two, and some dirty dishes huddled on a rickety table. Prints torn from magazines, all of women, clung to damp, streaked walls. In a corner a rusted stovepipe went crookedly up. A man, barefooted, clad in torn cotton overalls, was curiously half crouched, with one arm thrown across his face.

Another was stretched upon a cot which trailed soiled blankets.

Then, as Young looked, he saw that that cot dripped more than blankets—a slowly trickling stream of wet red—

Young felt his mind chasing itself in useless circles. Classrooms and campus were hardly preparation for such a scene as this. What should he do? What ought he to do? What could he do?

Unarmed as he was, there would be danger in making his presence known. The affair, whatever it had been, was done now. It looked horribly like what it must be. A man dead upon a bed, oozing fresh blood. Another, doubled in momentary sickness of his own act. But moments of remorse are moments of terror, too. Let a witness come in and that fellow might not hesitate to do again what he had already done. The very hysteria tearing at his limbs would drive him on.

And Young was such a stranger in these parts. The North, bleak under March winds, seemed suddenly far away from this swamp down toward the Gulf. The whole scene was a part of this too luscious, too empty, too everything land. He found every detail of it being burned into his memory.

There was the moon, a red ball distorted by mists, hanging between stark trunks and veils of moss. The frogs—never again would he be able to hear them without this beastly business springing instantly to his inner vision. A night-bird uttered jarring cries; furtive things slithered between the reeds. The whole bayou was busy about its own pleasant and natural affairs. It was only men who got snarled up in passions and crimes.

He dragged his gaze back to the boat's interior. On the cot that outstretched thing was already sagging into a horrid lifelessness. As he looked Young felt his muscles, his mind, his heart, suddenly harden—

Those were cords wound about the man's body. Whatever had passed must have been done while he was baled up like helpless hay.

The brute in the corner was moving now. There was a wild, breathy moan, and the shielding arm dropped. Why—he was only a boy, rigid under his rags, his face blanked by a desolate horror.

Fastening the canoe, Young stepped silently and suddenly into the shanty.

THE boy rose unsteadily, pressing back against the wall. A revolver lay upon the floor, gleaming in wicked blueness at the edge of that red pool. With a kick Young sent it behind him, then swooped to pick it up. He straightened himself, the weapon in his hands, conscious of a growing admiration for himself. He was doing excellently in this strange situation. He swung round on the other with a rasping "Well, what have you to say?"

The boy's hand wavered up in vague appeal, his voice quivered huskily.

"For Gawd's sake, stranger, I ain't—I never done it—it was him—"

"Have I accused you of doing anything?" Young coldly asked.

The boy lurched forward into a chair, feeling blindly for the support of the table. He might be sixteen, Young saw. He was averagely clean, in spite of his ragged clothes. The unmended rents revealed him as well set up beneath them. With that horror wiped off his face, he might even be attractive. He forced some words through dry breath.

"Wh-what you-all goin' ter do?"

"First I'm going to find out what has been done here?" Young answered.

He bent over the man on the cot. The fellow was dead; even an untrained eye could see that, without the help of the powder-burned wound above the heart. He might be fifty odd, but those swamp people age so swiftly that it was difficult to say. His frame was still powerful, but the face above it told of wreckage, mental, physical, and even more, moral. Even through the fake dignity of death, the smeared stubble and a subtly bloated look shouted evidence. It was not the sort of face one would care to encounter in a lonely place. But for the cords twined about the body, one could have felt sympathy with the lad.

These bonds must have been tied while the man slept, roping him helplessly down to the bed. Then the boy—Young could reproduce the scene. That slim young body, driven by desperation, or fear, or covetousness, creeping nearer and nearer, gun in hand, but with eyes half closed against what they were about to see. It had been flat murder of a defenseless man. Yet even so there had been a struggle. Those cords sagged loosely and raw welts about the man's wrists showed how he had

fought to free himself. Perhaps he had shrieked—cursed—begged— It must have been a sickening sight in that squalid interior. No wonder the wretched boy was still shaking from it.

Young wheeled round on him.

"Well? What have you to say?"

"I neveh done it, suh. Befo' Gawd I neveh teched him."

"Then who did?"

"He done it hisself, suh."

So that was to be the defense. Young felt a weary scorn of such stupidity.

"Of course," he said, "he was all roped down, he struggled to get free and fought with you for the revolver on purpose to kill himself."

That horror mask broke on the boy's face, and something human came through it. His hands went out as if to grasp the other's.

"Why, strangeh," he quivered, "how did you all come to know? Was you watchin'?"

Young felt baffled for an instant. But for the damning circumstances on the cot, he could almost have believed this appeal. It seemed impossible that a swamp derelict could be deliberately capable of so much drama of seeming innocence. But then, even animals have a marvelous cunning.

The whole case must be sifted, of course. Young felt qualified for that, since his specialty was law. Academic law, dwelling in these thin airs of pure principle which the law-court taints of tragedy and sentiment can not breathe. Young had never accepted a case; he had hardly ever been in a court-house. Now he was going to investigate this affair from a standpoint of legal detachment.

"Suppose you tell me about it. What is your name?"

"Sid Munson, suh. And—he—was Butch Yannigan. Leastways, that's how he was calling himself of late. First off, he was Hank Stivers and said as how he was my uncle."

"Wasn't he your uncle?"

"I don't rightly know. Ma's name was Stivers, and she told me once she had a brotheh. But Butch didn't favor huh none. Ma was kinda small, with yella haih and pretty as a pictcheh."

So that, Young thought, was where the boy got his head like a yellow chrysanthemum, and those almost girlish features. The narrative went on, a dreary repetition of sordid experience.

"We lived up in Looavull, Kaintucky, Pa and Ma and me. And say, we didn't live this away neitheh. No suh, Ma had it all fixed up right smaht. Pa was in the photographin' lay, and afteh he died, Ma she set up a beauty parleh. Then about five yeah gone she died too, right while she was fixin' a lady's haid. Jest said, 'O God,' and fell plumb oveh, so they told me.

"I was about twelve yeah old, and this Butch, he come along and allows he's Hank Stivers and my uncle, so he'll take cyah of me. So he done toted me off with him."

"Where did he take you?"

Sid's eyes dulled again, as if a mist of mean memories seeped up into them.

"To Little Rock, and Atlanta, and Waco, Texas, and Dallas and Shreveport and N'Yawlins—"

The names dropped like drab beads strung on soiled recollections. To the boy those places seemed all alike. Different names, but the same life to be dragged through in each. The sort of life which that man on the cot would inevitably exhale, as if his pores poisoned his surroundings.

"What did he do for a living?" Young asked.

"Mostly bootlaigging, suh. That was why he wanted a boy. Butch, he sold mostly to niggehs, and I'd cyarry the likkeh. They wouldn't be suspectin' a white kid, you see. Sometimes the dahkies'd die from drinkin' the likkeh, then Butch he'd haf to move on, quick. This heah swamp is the best lay he's had. He got in with the white officeh oveh to Anse Rouge. We'd bring the likkeh up in the canoe from way below N'Yawlins, and Butch, he'd get some good stuff to sell to the white men, and pass out a bottle now'n then to the judge and she'iff—"

It breathed on, the recital of a life caught in a double swamp, tangled more in mental dregs than even in the infested water maze all about them. Young's mind was already making it up into chapters of his projected book, "America and The Law." For three months, now, of this sabbatical semi-year, he had been wandering, carefully unknown, in the remoter districts, taking notes. Now this plum of actual, first-hand experience had fallen to him. He could taste already the triumphant hush which would fall upon the lecture-hall as he began to tell it.

Pointing suddenly to the dishonored thing on the cot, he shot a question across the dreary trickle of narrative.

"And how do you explain that?"

Sid's arm went up to shield his face. Under its thin cotton covering, the curved back showed a convulsive boiling beneath the shoulder blades.

"I'm—I'm comin' to that, suh. Give me time. You see, Butch, he'd drink, awful, sometimes. This last week he got to drinkin' up all the likkeh we'd fetched last trip to the Loweh Coast down riveh. Fred Barbusse, the she'iff, he come raisin' Cain, two days gone, 'bout Butch not savin' none fo' him. But Butch he couldn't seem to stop. He just hollehed and sang, and that Barbusse he said he'd come back in two—three days and if Butch hadn't got no likkeh then, he'd send us both to the turpentine camps.

"Oh, suh, he scaihed me most to death," the lad shivered on. "He just kinda slithered round, quiet like a moccasin snake. And Butch, he hollehed and laughed—and sometimes he'd vomit—and I was thinkin' of those prison camps—"

Young could image that scene. The widespread swamp, in spring green-gold under the sky; a hundred scents borne on soft airs, the waters flashing diamond sun ripples between a spot of horror such as only humanity can contrive. Surely the boy had had provocation enough. In spite of himself Young heard his voice softening with a certain understanding.

"And so you shot him?"

"*Me?*" The arm dropped to show a face too thin, too quivering, but lighted by a passion of denial. "No, suh, I neveh done it. I—it was Butch, you see. He just went on drinkin', suh, and soon he began hollehin' 'bout alligatehs crowdin' in the do' theah. He got the gun and began shootin'. Sometimes he'd try to shoot me. So I got the rope round him an' tied him down one time when he kinda slept. And just now, suh, he woke up and began again and he fought and got his ahm out, like you see—and fuhst thing I knew, he'd did hisself that away—"

He began to cry, in a tearing, convulsive boyish fashion, knuckling away the scald of the scanty tears. Young laid a hand on a thin shoulder.

"Come, my lad, after all he can't be so much loss."

"H-he was kind to me—sometimes, suh. A-and he was all I g-got—"

It was a desolate answer, but the best proof as yet that the boy's story was true. Young marveled at the way in which human beings cling to even their most sordid possessions. In the past days all —— must have howled through that shanty boat, and yet this boy wept with a doglike loyalty. It was really an escape for him, and the avenues of that escape were clearly marked.

"You know the way to Anse Rouge?" Young asked. "I will go with you and we will report this to the sheriff."

Sid's tears stopped, dried at their fount by fresh panic. He sprang up; a corner of the table caught his overalls, ripping them open so that one could see the heart pounding under his smooth young ribs.

"You goin' take me to the *law?*"

Here it was again; that distrust of legal authority which it was Young's self-appointed task to show as perhaps the gravest of American problems. He summoned an academic soothing.

"If your story is true you have nothing to fear, my lad. I will attend the inquest and give my evidence and—"

He might as well have dripped water on a smooth rock. One could actually watch the words sliding off Sid's mind. The panic was in his eyes now, making them gray panes through which one looked to interior terror.

"Fo' Gawd's sake, strangeh, don't do me that," he pleaded.

"But you must be cleared of the suspicion—" Young began.

"They won't be no suspicion," Sid panted, "not if I do like I meant to."

"What did you intend?"

"I was goin' to tie that cook stove to Butch an' sink him out in the bayou; right quick, too, fo' that Fred Barbusse 'lowed as he might come by tonight to see if Butch hadn't got no likkeh fo' him. If he come befo' I got away, I'll jest tell him Butch he'd gone to N'Yawlins to fetch it. That'd hold Barbusse two—three days. Then I'd clean up thet blood and cleah out. They'd neveh find me once I got out in the swamp, suh. I could get down to the city and away east to Mobile or maybe Pensacola and—"

"And be a hunted fugitive the rest of your days," Young finished. "Don't you see that you must go to the law to get washed clean of this?"

"They won't hunt me," Sid put desperately in. "They'll just 'low as Butch and me has both cleahed out. No one ain't goin' botheh 'bout *us*."

Every sentence opened a vista of this queer life below the law. It was like, Young thought, the life of these swamp creatures rustling unseen all about them, rooting in the mud of things, doomed to continual, furtive escapes. Young's tone took on authority.

"This must go through the proper process of law. I am a lawyer myself and—"

The boy seemed to fling himself on that announcement.

"Are you the strangeh that's been oveh to Anse Rouge?" He leaned closer, dropping the intimate information of his kind. "I heahed Fred Barbusse talkin' 'bout you last time I was to the sto'. They was figurin' what you wanted in these heah pahts and was 'lowin' to call the patrollehs some night and give you a sugah-house co'te."

To Young that was mere fantasy, a miasma rising from the dregs of the lad's mind.

"Things like that," he said, "don't happen to persons like myself. I am connected with a great university, the author of several books, and have dined with two presidents of the United States."

Sid hardly heard the words. It was as if his ears were stopped by the inferior, but powerful knowledges of this hidden place.

"It's Barbusse, the judge, and the gang oveh to Anse Rouge that runs this heah parish, suh. If they find Butch is dead they—" he shivered violently, forcing his lips to further speech—"they'll send me up to the turpentine camps."

"To where?"

"To the convict camps up in the pine woods, suh. They send any man they can get aholt of. Dahkies that they haul offen the freight trains, white men come down from the No'th and gone broke. You see, they get five dollehs fo' eve'y man they send, and they don' keer who they get. Fo' —— sake, strangeh—" the boy's tongue strangled down to a desperate whisper— "I knew a white kid oncet as got away from one of those camps. I saw his back—all scabbed up with the lash——it was awful! And most-like they'd send you up too, suh."

YOUNG'S lip curved in a superior consciousness.

"They have no possible charge against me," he said.

But once more the boy looked at him from that twisted viewpoint of his own place.

"They'd send anybody fo' five dollehs, suh. They send them up under diffe'unt names, so nobody eveh knows what's become of them. And if the prison guahds know you ain't wanted out again, you *don't get out*—no, suh. 'Long about youah time to go free, they use you right up with wo'k and the lash. Nobody ain't goin' to know 'bout it, you see."

He stopped in a sudden intensity of listening. The quick silence filled with the faint swamp noises, intensified now by the deepening night. Soft rustlings, the *lip-lap* of water at the cane-roots, faint callings of wild things to their kind. But Sid's keen hearing had caught something else. With a single breath he blew out the lamp. The black-and-silver swamp, which the light had held at bay, seemed to rush back in and fill the universe.

"That was a paddle I heahd," the boy mouthed at Young's ear. "Theah's a canoe 'round the bend on the main bayou. Most like it's that Fred Barbusse comin' afteh his likkeh."

"He's the sheriff, isn't he?" Young said quietly. "Then that will save us the trouble of going after him. And it will be better for him to see the body at once."

"You—all suah don't mean to stay and let him catch you?" Sid breathed.

"There is nothing for us to fear, my lad," Young reassured.

The boy's hands closed on his arm, in a tugging appeal.

"Suh, you don't know these pahts a-*tall*. Get in my canoe, quick suh, and we'll lay up in the ma'oh. Most-like Barbusse he'll think Butch has went down to N'Yawlins and won't nevah come inside in the shanty, seein' it dahk."

"If we did that," Young said, "we should be acting like guilty people."

He struck a match to light the lamp; the boy's hands tightened desperately on his wrist.

"You don't know—"

"We will stay and meet the sheriff," Young decided coolly.

"Fo' —— sake, suh—"

In the match flicker Sid's face stood out

like some disembodied, distorted mask become startlingly alive. His grasp spoke sheer terror, and something of its jangled magnetism crept into Young's nerves. Leagues of swamp, savagely untouched under the breathing night. A senseless, teeming fecundity, and in the midst he sat in this mean place, almost clinging to this unknown lad as they strained their ears for the sound of an approaching paddle. There was a feeling, born of the boy's fear, as of some evil creeping in on those silent water-leads. And all he had to offer against it were some surprized brain cells, deep down in his head, demanding, "What have I to do with this? How came I here at all?"

The boy sprang up with a smothered scream.

"I *won't* stay. I *won't* get sent to those camps. I—"

His hand came down on Young's, wrenching the revolver from surprized fingers; then a leaping form was dark against the gray oblong of the door. A contagion of panic swept Young for an instant. He had an impulse to jump in his own canoe and fly from that something coming nearer and nearer down Bayou Dark. It was the law which was approaching. There should have been assurance in that, and yet—

So this was how it felt to be afraid of the law. He was glad he had lived through that moment. After this he would understand something of the desperate mainsprings to which these people of the social cellars ticked off the dark hours of their lives. The consciousness of his own superior position came back. He lighted the lamp and quietly waited.

SO THIS was Barbusse. Young remembered having seen him over at Anse Rouge. He stood suddenly in the rotting doorway, his eyes, hard and opaque as jet beads, glittering back at the light. Like all these Cajuns he was the obvious product of an unbroken French descent. The sort of man one sees in the Normandy fields, with long-nosed, pointed faces under big black hats, their shuffling, under-sized figures steeped in determined suspicion of anything strange. For an instant Young's heart sank, then he summoned his most impressive ease.

"I am glad you have come. You are the sheriff, I believe?"

True to his kind, Barbusse met question with question.

"An' if I be—*hein?*"

"There has been a terrible affair here. This poor fellow—"

"Ah *ha.*"

The hard black of Barbusse's gaze, taking in the fetid room, pounced like a ferret on the thing on the bed. There was something of the ferret in his movements, too. A revolver seemed to flow furtively into his hand, shining its dull menace full at Young.

"Put op zose han'."

"But I—"Young protested.

"I goin' shoot, yais."

It was absurdly humiliating to have to stand with hands above one's head while the fellow fumbled one's person for possible weapons. Classrooms and theories seemed all at once remote. There was nothing academic in the feeling of a gun-muzzle thrust against one's stomach. Kicking a chair into an open space, Barbusse gave orders.

"Seet down, an' keep zose han' op behin' ze neck." He looked unmovedly down at the body on the cot. "Murdair, *hein?*"

"I don't know," Young said. "I only arrived here ten minutes ago, and found him already dead. In fact it was the shot that guided me here."

"An' how you come be here at all?"

"I was lost in the swamp in my canoe."

"An' where ze keed what leev for zis Yannigan?"

For an instant Young struggled with an instinct to shield the boy. Then the usual, orderly process of his mind came back. This sheriff person was unpleasant, of course. Minor officials of the criminal law were likely to be. But as soon as the matter came before proper authorities—Complete candor, a flat reliance on legal procedure, was the only course.

"The boy ran away when he heard you coming. But I am convinced that he had nothing to do with it."

"*Pouah.*" Barbusse's sneer was all embracing. "Zat keed sink he get off by zose swamp, eh? I got niggair trackair go find heem too quick. As for zat Yannigan—" He turned his back on the cot as if dropping its contents into complete discard. "Now you; what you do roun' zese place, eh?"

"As I said," Young told him, "I was lost in—"

Barbusse's hand slapped that down into empty air.

"I mean, for why you come by Anse Rouge?"

"I have a perfect right to be in any part of my own country."

"You own countree," the man shrugged. "You not belong for zese parish; you not belong for Louisiane at all, no. You come from ze Nort'. You come by Anse Rouge. You not say who you be. You get no lettair, not know nobuddee; you talk wiz niggair, you read op in zose *re-cord*—"

So this was the real core of the matter, a suspicion of a stranger taking notes. This Barbusse, too, was a power in his particular environment. The place seemed suddenly inimical, set down in these "shaking prairies" that stretched to the Gulf. Young summoned all the dignity which his absurd position could compass.

"I will tell my story to the proper authorities, Mr. Barbusse. You can arrest me, if you wish. But let me tell you that I am a professor of the Mid-Western University of Illinois."

"Professair, eh?" Barbusse remained unimpressed. "Zere was one professair come for Anse Rouge two week ago. He play beeg drum an' sell stuff to mek niggair hair go straight."

The man's ignorance was like a blank wall. Young could feel his own mind bouncing back from its adamant like a squash ball. All at once he saw this whole Mississippi delta region as a sort of sink for the whole country. A mental sink as much as a natural one. It was as if stupidity poured down like the mud in the brown waters, to settle in these somnolent, half amphibious flats. It was extraordinary how much power sheer ignorance can have. And he himself, for all his position, and the real brilliance of his work, was miring down in it. A stinging flame roweled him to speech. It came out in the futile, physical anger of a man whose mind outstrips his body.

"You stupid fool; do as you please. Go ahead and arrest me. You are simply another case of how America permits its legal and political power to drift into the hands of the unfit. You are right, I *have* been reading your court records, and those of other places all through the South. They will make mighty interesting chapters in my book."

Young stopped, with a deadening conviction of his own unwisdom. He could hear his words ringing hollowly against the other's sheer material command of the situation. In the polished beads which served Barbusse as eyes, he could catch that peculiar, rat-like rapacity of the French peasant. There was something besides; a glint as of some half savage thing who sees its own den threatened. Young gathered himself with an exasperated laugh.

"If you imagine you can make a charge of murdering that raving bootlegger stick against me—"

That drowned in silence. A silence so thick that Young could feel himself sinking in it, as he might have sunk in the swamp. Sinking in the brute's sheer ignorance. Yet it was not so much ignorance as that queer other knowledge which he had felt also in the boy. An intimate knowing of this sodden, isolated, half-tropic maze and its peculiar methods.

"Murdair?" Barbusse shrugged again at the stiffening corpse. "I seenk more bettair lef' heem go, yais. Nobuddee going bothair 'bout *heem*, no. An' murdair trial, he tek too long an' too much fuss. We got ozzair charge we can breeng for you; settle eet more queeck, yais."

There was menace in that. To Young it was like some unpleasant dream, in which one is bereft of all volition and swept on by a current of strangeness. He could not really be here in this foul place, with this queerly potent sheriff and that self-slain thing on the bed. He saw the danger of his position. For weeks he had been wandering, leaving no address nor trail by which he could be traced.

The boy's warnings came back on him with a rush. "They make up a charge and send them to the prison camps under some other name." Who would ever connect a Smith or Jones, "sent up" for vagrancy or petty larceny, with Professor Young of the Mid-Western University? And again: "If you're sent up for a short time, they just use you right up. They work you to death, and they use the lash—especially if they know you're not wanted out again." A splendid scheme for shutting the mouths of those who know too much. Those convict camps up in the pine flats could keep their secrets well. Probably only a few negroes ever came out of them again.

He could see it all. A farce of a night

trial, conducted in sinister mockery by judge, sheriff and a couple of their hangers-on. They would sting him to fury, if they could, so as to have an excuse for manhandling. Then a swollen-faced, blood-stained, handcuffed thing, clad in torn clothes, being hustled on to the little train that tooted off, each dawn, on a forgotten track that straggled vaguely northward—

A wave of fear swept him. The same fear that had quivered in Sid Munson's young limbs; but he lacked the boy's knowledge of how to deal with things here. Barbusse knew that, and the beady blackness of his eyes clouded with malice. To him it was over, and that human thing on the chair no longer a danger.

To Young came a red hope, a flash of "This is the time—"

He had jumped—kicked—struck. In a daze of violent action he saw that commanding revolver flying through the air, spitting the bullet which Barbusse had just time to fire before Young's kick caught his wrist. Barbusse himself was backward over the table, his head in two broken cups, his nose streaming blood. Young swooped for the fallen gun. The fumes of its discharge filled his lungs with an acrid confusion.

The situation was in his hands now, but what was he to do with it. Even if he jumped in his canoe and took Barbusse's boat away with him, he was still as much lost in the swamp as before. At any hour some liquor-craving negro might come sneaking to that illegal shanty boat. With a search after him, Young's shrift in that water tangle would be over by dawn. But for that foolish conceit of knowing better, he could have escaped all this by merely stepping into Sid Munson's canoe. He cleared the revolver smoke from his eyes, but it brought no corresponding clearance of his brain. It only showed him the situation more plainly. A man sinisterly dead upon the cot; an officer of the law prostrate among broken dishes, clutching at a smashed wrist.

A touch on his arm sent him whirling to face it. So this was how things happened, for he had almost fired. It was only some lingering self-control which had held his finger from that trigger. The boy's voice would have come too late.

"It's me, suh—don't shoot."

"You!" Young felt an extraordinary relief welling up in him. He found that strange, too. He—Young, of Mid-Western—ready almost to weep with gladness at the coming of a young swamp-rat, nearly naked under shredded overalls.

"You've come back," he managed.

"I nevah went," Sid told him. "I shoved in amongst the canes and hid. I thought if they was goin' to be any sea'ch fo' me they'd neveh think to look spang up against the shanty boat."

That was the wisdom of the swamp at its work. It was extraordinary how the lad's presence changed things.

"What had we better do?" Young asked, and Sid's answer was definite.

"We'll tie that Barbusse up fuhst, suh—you get the rope offen Butch. I'm kinda scaihed of techin' dead people. Then we betteh light out so quick's we can."

THE canoe rocked under their weight, its fabric clammy with great gouts of dew. The night was all silver now; the darkened shanty boat half invisible among the pressing reeds. Sid untied the rope of Barbusse's craft and sent it adrift on the lazy current. "Betteh make suah," he said, "that he cain't come afteh us."

"But," Young objected, "we can't leave even that brute all tied up to starve."

They spoke in whispers, though there was none to hear them except the two in the boat shack—one dead and the other struggling to a consciousness of bonds. But this, Young thought, was how men talked outside the law, with heads close together and voices hushed lest even the canes should hear.

"They'll be some niggehs, suh, come by in the mawnin'. They ain't goin' to come into this mahsh afteh dahk, so we got all night to get away in."

To get away! Here again Young had to fling himself on the boy's knowledge, for his own superiorities were gone.

"You heard what he said about black trackers tracing you through the swamp," he warned.

"I know, suh; I got to figuah out anotheh way. Anse Rouge, maybe, and light out on a freight cyah."

"Light out to where?" Young asked.

The boy quivered as if with cold, dragging a torn sleeve across his eyes.

"I don't know just wheah; the main

thing is to get theah fuhst. I reckon I'll get along somehow. It cain't be no wohse than what it's been."

The sluggish current was bearing them off. Already a cypress bend half obscured the darker patch of the shanty boat. It was a picture of the lad's life; caught in the unseen marsh currents with even what he had had already gone. And he would go on, drifting on and out in that strange limbo where the law ends. Where it frays out and the ragged ends of it are used as lashes for weaker backs. No wonder they feared it when all they knew was its horrid phantom.

Sid dropped his arm and the hopeless mask of his face brought Young back from those imaginings.

"But how am I to get away?" he asked. "My things are in that rattletrap hotel back in Anse Rouge. There are letters in my suitcase and they'd trace me."

"Don't leave no papehs, suh," Sid exclaimed, and years of furtive lore were behind his words. He cocked an eye at the moon. "It's along 'bout nine o'clock now. They's that N'Yawlins Express stops at eleven-thuhty. We can make it so's you can get youah baggage down to the depot. That gets you to the city 'bout six-thuhty in the mawnin'. *He*—" he nodded to the disappearing shanty boat—"won't be gettin' moh'n found by then. They's a train fo' Montgomehy, Alabam', leaves right afteh—me an' Butch we took it once when he wanted to get outa the State quick—" He broke off and there came an instant of resentment. "I guess you won't be settin' so much sto' on the law afteh this."

Young wondered at the differences which could set people apart. Never before had he seen the law as such a white light, because never before had he known the darkness beyond it, where only its counterfeit rules. What a priceless evening this had been! Its knowledge was like a weapon in his hands and—

"If we going get to Anse Rouge, suh," Sid broke in, "we betteh be paddlin'."

Except for the boy he would be lost, held in this rat-trap swamp to wait for the trackers from Anse Rouge. It was lawlessness which was taking him back to the safeties of the real law. Probably he'd never get it all really straightened out in his mind. But that, at least, was a real, breathing lad bending to the paddle. A lad who was going on and out into the night's mystery, headed for heaven only knew what.

Young spoke suddenly.

"We mustn't be seen together in Anse Rouge."

"No, suh; I wasn't aimin' to. I ain't allowin' to spoil youah get-away."

Young brushed that aside, tearing on the way he saw opening before him.

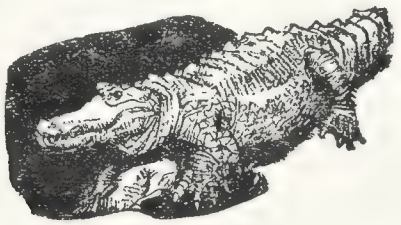
"You hide in that willow thicket this side of the station. I have another suit and shoes in my suitcase. I'll bring them to you there. When the train comes in you sneak round on the off-side and board the last car as it swings out. I'll meet you in the smoker and—"

Sid turned, and the flash in his eyes seemed brighter than the moon.

"You—you goin' take me with you?" he breathed.

Young dug his paddle in the dark water, scattering the black bayou surface to a diamond shower of drops.

"You young ass," he growled. "Did you think I was going to leave you here?"



The Book of The Tiger

The Emperor

A Complete Novelette

by Harold Lamb

Author of "White Falcon," "The Winged Rider," etc.

FOREWORD BY TRANSCRIBER

FOUR hundred years ago there lived a happy-go-lucky and gallant boy who was dubbed the "Tiger." He was born in the mountains of Central Asia, where the snow peaks of the Hindu Kush and the Roof of the World itself stand like sentinels against the skyline.

He was a Moghul, which is a European way of saying that he was a descendent of the great Mongols—Genghis Khan on one side, Tamerlane on the other. When he was eleven years of age his father died, leaving him the kingship of a small mountain country, Ferghana, and a fellowship of a few Moghul noblemen to serve him. Some of his nobles became devoted to the boy, others betrayed him for their own gain.

No one—least of all the Tiger himself—dreamed that he would one day conquer India. Or that he would be known to history as the first of the great Moghuls.

His days were spent in the saddle. In all his years he did not pass the festival of Ramazan twice in the same place. At seventeen he was already a veteran in warfare—in the warfare of the clans of Central Asia, than which there is nothing more merciless.

Ferghana, his native state, was wrested from him by his enemies. He won it back, only to see it grasped by his uncles who had helped to gain it, and they in turn were driven from it by barbarian invaders from the northern deserts.

Perhaps in all history there never was a prince more recklessly daring than the young Tiger. He was wounded a dozen times, twice in the head. Once his own followers believed him dying, and again he gave up all hope, made his last ablutions and prepared to meet death, only to be preserved to life by the strange good fortune that dogged him in his darkest hours.

The Tiger was a remarkable swordsman. His strength, in full manhood, was such that he was known to pick up a man under each arm and run along the edge of a rampart, leaping the embrasures.

He had set his heart on gaining an empire. He was the heir of emperors. He meant to wrest his heritage from his enemies.

Samarkand, the golden city of Tamerlane, aroused his longing. Samarkand was at that time the rendezvous for the astronomers, the poets and savants of Asia—as Bagdad once had been, and as Cordova was in Europe. These Moghuls of his were born warriors, fond of making a pyramid of the heads of foemen after a battle, but they were scholarly gentlemen as well. Their knowledge of the exact sciences, of medicine, latitude and longitude—of music and letters would have astonished the contemporary barons of England and France.

"The Book of the Tiger," copyright, 1926, by Harold Lamb.

The Tiger did make himself master of Samarkand, only to be driven out twice, the last time by the Khan of the northern barbarians, Shaibani. He never gave up hope. Hunted by his enemies, he gambled with his last stake, his life. It was one of the most remarkable feats in the annals of men.

Confronted by an army that outnumbered his own followers hopelessly, he rode out between the two lines and challenged any enemies who had courage to draw sword against him. Five foemen had the courage, and he killed or badly wounded all of the five, one after the other. It was sheer desperation, but his own retainers were fired by such an example and his foes correspondingly dismayed. Somewhat to the Tiger's surprize, whole tribes began to rally to him in his hills.

Besides his mother and his sot of a brother, Jahangir, he now had an unruly army to care for, and he reflected that his ancestors had once ruled the mountain city of Kabul, midway between Samarkand and India. So to Kabul he went with his tatterdemalions, and the Providence that watched over the Tiger guided him to the plunder of eight hundred suits of armor and the weapons he needed, on the way.

Beyond Kabul lay India, another world, and at that time a much harried world. Here were vast multitudes, and the treasures of centuries. It was divided then as now between Moslen and Hindu.

The Moslem portion was the empire centering around the Punjab, and Delhi was its chief city. Sultan Ibrahim, the lord of the Lodi Afghans, was king of Delhi, and a cruel sort of monarch at that, even for an Afghan. Even members of his own family turned against him, and one of them was to appeal to the Tiger for aid.

In the heart of India and throughout the *Thur* or desert country, the Rajputs ruled the Land of Kings. They were chivalrous gentlemen, quarrelsome among themselves, with feuds that dated back to the sun and moon—magnificent swordsmen, Hindus all, and perfectly at unity when an invader was to be repelled.

Their feudal strongholds were almost impregnable—perched on masses of rock rising out of the plain—Chitore, the ruling city, the famous Rantambore, and Gwalior. Rana Sanga was then their overlord, being master of Chitore.

Until that day cannon had been more ornamental than useful—huge pieces casting stones more often than balls, and depending more on the effect of one thunderous discharge—that might or might not do more damage to the artillerists than to the enemy—than any sustained fire. Foot-soldiers were looked upon by Hindu and Moslem lords alike as a kind of inferior race, something in the way of camp-followers. Battles were fought by massed horsemen, and a charge driven home or broken, won or lost the issue.

A gorgeous pageant, India, in that age of Rajput glory, when horse and elephants were the servants of men and all men were of the blood of kings.

Down the Khyber Pass, into this array of multitudinous hosts, the Tiger was to advance with ten thousand hardy Moghuls and some Turks who had dreams of making artillery useful. He was aided by the strict discipline of the Mongols, by generalship that was the fruit of bitter experience, and by a determination never to turn back from this new land until he had conquered it.

He was to enter India without understanding the enervating heat and the fever that always took toll of his race, or the impossibility of returning again to the cool mountain kingdom of Kabul, in order to rule his new land from his old home—or the homesickness that thinned the ranks of his followers more than the fever.

Realizing these things, almost as the last battle was fought, the Tiger's will did not weaken. His empire gained; he *would* be emperor. The Providence that had aided him now took its toll, and sickness ended his days, in the prime of his life.

But the empire of the Moghuls was a thing achieved, and the foundation of modern India laid.

The Tiger has been in his tomb these four centuries, but his story has been written, and fortunately by himself. This indefatigable warrior who is known to history as Babar, the Tiger, had the gift of setting things down as they happened.

The *Babar-nameh*, or Story of the Tiger, has served as a literary masterpiece in Asia for four centuries. The most honored scholars and even reigning monarchs have copied it in different dialects of Persian and Turki. Because Babar told the truth about himself and told it clearly and well,

the story is becoming a classic among Anglo-Saxons.*

CHAPTER I

THE LAIR OF THE TIGER

IN THE month of June† I set out from my homeland of Ferghana intending to pass through Khorassan, and halted at the summer pastures in the foothills. I here entered my twenty-third year and began to use the razor on my face.

The followers who still stood by me, great and small, were more than two hundred and less than three. Most of them were on foot, and shod with brogues, clubs in their hands and tattered cloaks over their shoulders. So poor were we that we had only two tents. My own I gave to my mother; and they pitched for me at every halting place a felt covering stretched over crosspoles, in which I took up my quarters. Though bound for the southern hills and a strange country, I was not without hope.

Jahangir Mirza was with me. Although it has been written, "Ten dervishes may sleep on one cloak, but two kings can not rest in the same climate—" and although in the past there had been heart-burning and rivalry between my brother and myself, owing to our both desiring the throne —yet at this time he had left his country to accompany me. He was my brother and dependent on me.

And messages began to arrive from the wandering Moghul tribes, that they desired to accompany the King.

So I left my encampment and marched against Kabul.‡ In three or four marches we reached the Pass of Ghur, and here we had news that Shirkeh Arghun, the officer in whom Mokím had greatest confidence, had taken post with an army to intercept any who might come by this route.

The instant I received this information, between midday and afternoon prayers, we set out and marched all night, ascending the hill pass. Until this time I had never seen the star Suhail. But on reaching the top of the pass, Suhail* appeared below, bright to the south.

"That can not be Suhail!" I said.

"It is, indeed," they answered, and one of the chieftains repeated this verse:

"O Suhail, how far dost thou shine, and where dost thou rise?
Thine eye is an omen of fortune to him who is lighted by thee."

The sun was a spear's length high when we reached the foot of the valley and alighted from our horses. The party we sent in advance to reconnoiter—a number of enterprising young warriors—fell in with Shirkeh and instantly attacked him. They kept harassing him until reinforcements came up and completely routed his following. Shirkeh himself was dismounted and made prisoner with eighty or a hundred of his best men. I spared his life, and theirs, and they entered into my service.

At this stage the Hazaras of the desert came through a pass in the east to join me.†

After a general council in which the siege of Kabul was decided upon, we marched forward. From day to day I sent messengers to Mokím, the usurper who held the city; they brought back sometimes excuses, sometimes pleasant answers. But his real object all the while was to gain time. When I took Shirkeh prisoner he had sent gallopers to his father and brother elsewhere and he now delayed, hoping to have aid from them.

One day I ordered the whole host—main body, right wing and left—after donning armor and clothing the horses in mail, to advance close up to the city walls. They were to display their arms and inflict some punishment on the town's garrison.

Jahangir Mirza, with the right wing, marched toward the gardens of the suburbs. As there was a river in front of the main body, I proceeded by some tombs and took station on a rise facing high ground. The advance parties crossed the river and galloped insultingly close up to the Currier's Gate.

Only a few of Mokím's men had come out

*The transcriber wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the translators of the *Babar-nameh*, Dr. Leyden and Mr. William Erskine, from whose excellent version written a hundred years ago the following narrative is taken—also to the valuable commentary of Dr. Stanley Lane-Poole.

† 1504.

‡ Babar went through the Kaluga Pass, little thinking that he, with his shepherds and marauders, was about to play a part similar to the great conquerors his ancestors, Genghis Khan and Tamerlane, who had gone through that pass—called the Iron Gate—before him.

*Canopus—this star is not visible in the northern latitudes.

† The Hazaras were a people descended from a remnant of the horde of Genghis Khan, which passed near here. Babar was entering the hill passes of the Hindu Kush, the breeding ground of the fierce-fighting Afghan and Pathan tribes. In nearly every case these tribes flocked to give battle to Babar, but, after a beating, followed him cheerfully in the hope of more sword strokes and plunder. They poured out of the passes of the Hindu Kush a thousand strong. But it was no easy matter to keep them in hand.

of the gates; these could not stand their ground, but fled and sought shelter in the city. A throng of townspeople had ventured beyond the walls to the outer slope of the citadel in order to watch events. As these ran for shelter a great dust arose and many were trampled and fell down.

Between the river and the nearest gate, on the heights and in the highroad, Mokím's men had dug pits in which pointed stakes had been fixed, and the whole covered over with grass. Sultan Kuli Chenak and several other cavaliers fell into these pits when they pushed on too quickly.

On the right wing one or two of my warriors exchanged a few sword strokes with members of the garrison who had sallied out. But they soon fell back, as they had no orders to engage in an attack.

The men in the town were now both alarmed and dispirited. Mokím, through some of his chieftains, offered to submit to me and to surrender Kabul. Upon this, he was brought before me and tendered his allegiance. I did all I could to dispel his uneasiness and received him with kindness. It was agreed that the next day he should march out with all his followers and property and yield the fortress. I appointed Jahangir Mirza and another officer with some of my most trusty servants to guard Mokím's family as well as Mokím himself while he was leaving Kabul. So he set out with his train and departed in peace.

In the end of September, by the blessing of Almighty God, I gained possession of Kabul and Ghazni with all their provinces, without a battle or contest of any kind.

KABUL is surrounded on all sides by hills—the walls of the town extend up a hill. The skirts of the near-by heights are covered with gardens.

Here is both heat and cold. From Kabul you may go in a single day to a place where snow never falls, and in two hours you may reach a spot where snow is always found. In the summer nights you can not sleep without a sheepskin coverlet. Though the snow falls very deep in winter, the cold is not intense.

The citadel itself is surprizingly high, overlooking the great lake and the lower meadows. These are very beautiful when the valleys are green. In the spring the brisk north wind blows incessantly—they call it the *badi-perwan*, the pleasant breeze. In the spring, too, the passes of the Hindu Kush to the north are closed, as in winter. The watercourses are in flood, and only for three or four months can the mountain tracks be used.

On the west lie the mountains of the Hazara and Nukdari tribes, to the south, Afghanistan,* to the east, the Khyber pass, Peshawar and some of the countries of Hind.† And Kabul is one of the two great markets between Hindustan and Persia. The goods and horses of Khorassan, Irak, Roum and Chin‡ all come to Kabul.

And in Kabul are the tribes of all the mountains—Turks, Aimaks and Arabs, Tajiks and Afghans; in the bazaar a dozen tongues are spoken. The Afghans are great thieves and robbers, even in time of peace; they pray for war, and rarely had such an opportunity been offered them as now.

On every hand are rivers cold as ice, and pure, and gardens green, gay and beautiful —with spreading plane trees that shelter agreeable spots. At the time when the shrubs are in flower, I do not know any place in the world to compare to it.

Inasmuch as it is shut in by natural ramparts, it is easy to defend and difficult to invade; yet, owing to its warlike tribes it is a country to be governed by the sword, not the pen. So many of the wandering clans had joined my standard that Kabul was unable to furnish them with necessary corn, horses and money.

After mustering my army and questioning those officers who knew the country best, it was decided to make raids beyond the borders. Some advised that we should march against Khorassan; others, against Daman. It was at last agreed that we should eventually make a foray into Hindustan.

But in the next year my mother was seized with a slow fever, and blood was let without effect. A Khorassan physician attended her and gave her watermelons, but as her time was come, she died in six days and was received into the mercy of God. We carried her remains to the Garden of the New Year, and there Kasim and I committed them to earth.

During the period of mourning the tidings of the death of the Little Khan, my

*Babar refers to the mountains held by the Afghan tribes, due south of Kabul.
†Modern India.
‡Roum—modern Turkey-in-Asia; Chin—modern China.

uncle, and of my grandmother, reached me. Our lamentation began anew, and great was our grief for the separation we suffered. After directing readings of the Koran and prayers to be offered up for the dead, we returned to our rule.

At this time there was such an earthquake that many ramparts of fortresses and many houses were shaken to the ground. Many people died when the houses fell upon them. One whole portion of a hillside broke off and slid the length of a bowshot, and a spring broke through, forming a well in the place where it had been. In other places the earth was so split that a person might have hid himself in the gaps.

A great cloud of dust rose from the tops of the mountains. Nur-alla, the lute player, happened to be entertaining me with the guitar at the time; he had also a lute with him. He caught up both instruments in his hands, but had so little control of himself that they knocked against each other.

Jahangir Mirza was at Tibah, in the upper veranda of a palace. The moment the earth began to quake he threw himself down and escaped without injury. One of his servants was on this same floor when the upper story fell on him. God preserved the man and he came to no harm.

That day there were thirty-three shocks, and for the space of a month the earth quivered two or three times every day and night. By great exertions my officers and warriors repaired the gaps in the walls of the fortress by the end of the month.*

CHAPTER II

THE TERROR OF THE HEIGHTS

IN THE month of June tidings came from the Mirzas of Khorassan that Shaibani Khan had drawn the sword against them, and was invading their country. So I set out for Khorassan to oppose the Uzbeks—mustering the great body of the army and pushing forward to the west in light array and with all speed.

How can any man refuse to give aid? How much better it is to go forward toward achievement and glory, even though life be lost. The wise have well called fame a second life!

On the journey ambassadors came from Khorassan to urge me to join the Mirzas. What was to hinder me? I had marched eight hundred miles over the mountains with that very purpose.

The Mirzas had advanced as far as the river Murghab, and there I waited upon them. One of their kinsmen came out far to greet me; they were younger than he and ought to have come out farther to welcome me. Probably their delay was due to the last night's drinking-bout, and not to discourtesy.

It was agreed that they were to receive me formally at the Mirzas' Hall of Ceremony in the encampment—that I was to bow at once on entering and the elder prince was to advance to the edge of his dais to embrace me. As soon as I stepped into the Hall of Ceremony, I bowed and then advanced without stopping toward Badi'-ez-zaman Mirza, who rose rather tardily to greet me. Kasim Beg, who was keenly alive to my honor—which he looked upon as his own—laid hold of my girdle and gave me a tug. I understood and advanced more slowly.

Although this was not a drinking-party, wine was put before us in gold and silver goblets with the meat. At that time I drank no wine. The entertainment was wonderfully elegant. On their trays was every sort of delicacy—fowl, goose and assorted dishes.

Indeed the entertainments of Badi'-ez-zaman were celebrated, and certainly this party was free, easy and unconstrained. I likewise went to a feast of Mazafar Mirza. When the wine began to take effect, one of the Amirs began to dance, and he danced extremely well. The dance was one of his own invention.

These Mirzas had wasted—as I soon learned—three or four months in marching from Herat, in getting together their forces, before reaching the river. The princes were very good hosts, and skilled in arranging a pleasure party; they had a turn for conversation and wit; yet they had no knowledge at all of carrying on a campaign, or any warlike operations. They were perfect strangers to a battle or the hazards of a warrior's life.

When a strong detachment of Uzbek plunderers came within reach, all the princes

* Delayed by the earthquake, Babar did not advance into Hindustan at this time, but thrashed the neighboring tribes to his heart's content. The Afghans and Hazaras began to have a healthy respect for the Tiger when he stormed their mountain sangars and erected pyramids of the heads of the slain. He also held his turbulent warriors in iron restraint. He still dreamed of driving Shaibani Khan from his homeland.

met and every one talked. But with all this ado they could not manage to order out a light force to drive in the enemy foragers. I asked permission to lead out my men. Fearful of their own reputation if they suffered me to do this, they would not let me move.

Nothing was accomplished. Shaibani Khan, who had captured the frontier city of Balkh, went into winter quarters unmolested. The Mirzas came on horseback to my quarters and urged me to stay out the winter with them in Herat.

Now in all the habitable world there is not another city so splendid as Herat. I was persuaded to stay for a while.

At first the princes quartered me in the New Garden; but as I did not like the place, they gave me a poet's dwelling and there I remained for the twenty days of my visit in Herat. Every day I went to perform salutation before the elder prince as custom required; but they were more concerned with entertainment than with customs of Genghis Khan, which had always been faithfully observed by my family.

Once we were carried to the Terebkhana, the Pleasure House, in the midst of a delightful garden. Every part of this little edifice was covered by paintings. Two carpets were placed in a balcony, and Mazafar Mirza and I sat on one—my brother and a sultan on the other. At once the cupbearers began to supply every one with pure wine, which they quaffed as if it had been the water of life. The party waxed warm. They took a fancy to make me drink, but when I excused myself, they did not press me.

The people of Herat sing in a low and delicate fashion. There was a singer of Jahangir Mirza's present, by name Mir Jan, who always sang in a loud harsh voice and out of tune. My brother, who was far gone, proposed that he should sing. He sang accordingly, but in a horribly disagreeable tone. The men of Khorassan pride themselves on good manners. Though they turned away their ears and frowned, no one ventured to stop Mir Jan out of respect to my brother.

Afterward we went to the new winter palace. By the time we reached it, Yúsuf, the foster-brother, being extremely drunk, rose and danced. He was a musical man, and danced well. The party began to be very merry and friendly. Mazafar Mirza pressed upon me a sword and a whitish Kiptchak horse. Two of his slaves performed indecent, scurvy tricks while the company was heated with wine. The party did not break up until an untimely hour.

During all the twenty days in Herat I rode out to see some new place, and a feast was always ready when we halted.

THE winter was come and snow began to fall in the mountains that separated me from my dominion of Kabul. Both Kabul and Ghazni were prone to external violence and internal confusion—at the hands of the tribes. It was a month's journey by the short mountain road, even if this was passable. It did not seem good to me to winter so far from my kingdom, and as I could not make my hosts understand this, I summoned my men and left Herat.

At first I was obliged to march slowly, to give my followers who were scattered afield a chance to join me. So long did we tarry that before we left the foothills behind we saw the moon of Ramazan.

Snow fell incessantly. The farther we advanced, the deeper was the snow. At first it reached to the horses' knees; in two or three days it rose above the stirrups, and in many places the animals could not find footing. And still the snow fell.*

When we passed the last of the large villages—where we bought up all available grain—not only did the snow continue deep, but we began to be uncertain of the road. I, and others, proposed going around by Kandahar in the south, where we could keep to the valleys. As it was winter, the shorter mountain road would be difficult and dangerous.

Kasim Beg, however, insisted that the southern road was far around, and this one direct. In the end we resolved to go ahead on the mountain track.

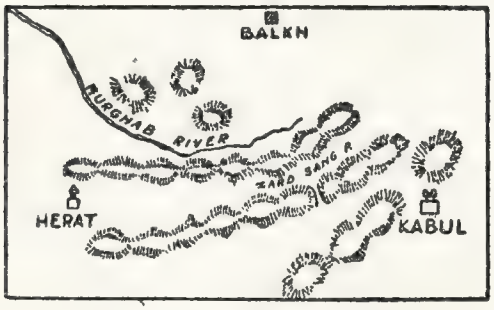
One Sultan Bishai was our guide. I do not know whether it was on account of old age, or his heart failing him, or the depth of the snow—but when he lost the road he never found it again.

As we had come this way on the urging

*Babar soon saw that the play-acting princes were not the sort that could oppose his enemy, Shaibani Khan. Nor could they bring themselves to let the young king, a veteran of ten years' warfare, strike a blow against the invader. Babar guessed shrewdly that if he did not head back at once to Kabul, he would have no kingdom left by spring. It was now mid-January, the road by which he had come was closed, and he set out to find a new route over the snow-bound Hindu-kush.

of Kasim Beg, he and his sons were anxious to preserve their reputation for sagacity, and managed to discover a road, after dismounting and trampling down the snow. Next day the drifts were higher, and as the road was no longer to be found in spite of all exertions, we were brought to a stand.

There was nothing for it but to turn back to a place where firewood could be



found in plenty. Here we sent our sixty or seventy chosen men to look for Hazaras or other tribesmen who might be wintering under the heights.

At this place we halted three or four days, waiting the return of the men we had sent out. They came back, indeed, but without having found a proper guide. Putting our trust in God, and sending Sultan Bishai before us, therefore, we again advanced by the road where we had been checked.

In the days that followed we endured many hardships and difficulties—such suffering as I have not undergone at any other time. For a week we kept on, trampling down the snow, yet making no more than two or three miles a day. I helped at treading down the drifts. With ten or fifteen of my household, Kasim Beg and his sons and servants, we all dismounted and went at the labor.

At each step the man in advance sank to the chest, but still we went on trampling it down. The strength of the leading man soon became exhausted, and he gave way to another. The dozen who followed then pulled forward a horse without a rider; the horse sank to the stirrups, and was done up after advancing a bowshot. He was then pulled aside and another brought up. In this way our party broke the trail, while the rest—even our best men, many of them Begs—rode without dismounting along the track, hanging their heads. It was no time for worrying them with orders—if a man has pluck and endurance he will hasten to such work of his own accord.

Our trail led us in three or four days to a *khawal*, or cave, called Khawal-Koti, at the foot of the Zirrin pass.*

That day the wind rose and the snow fell so heavily that we all expected to meet death together. When we reached the cave the storm was at its height. The drifts were so high, the path so narrow, only one person could move forward at a time. The horses, too, came on with difficulty over the beaten track, and the hours of daylight were at their shortest. We halted at the mouth of the cavern—the first of us who had reached the *khawal* before twilight ended.

When it was dark, about evening prayers, the men ceased coming in because they had halted wherever they happened to be. Many men waited for morning in the saddles.

The cave seemed to be small. I took a hoe, and after clearing and scraping the snow away, made a resting-place for myself at the mouth of the cave, about the size of a prayer carpet; I dug down in the snow as deep as my breast but did not reach the ground. This hole gave me some shelter from the wind and I sat down in it.

My men urged me to go into the cavern but I would not. I felt that for me to be in warm shelter and comfort, while my other followers were out in the snow and the drift—for me to be sleeping at ease inside while my men were in distress—was not what I owed them. It would have been forsaking their fellowship in suffering. It was right that, whatever their troubles were, I should share with them. There is a proverb: "Death in the company of friends is a feast."

So I kept on sitting in the drift, in the hole I had dug out, until bedtime prayers when the snow fell so fast that, as I had been crouching on my feet all the time, I found four inches of snow on my head and shoulders. That night I caught a cold in my ear.

About that time a party, after exploring the depths of the cavern, came out and reported that the *khawal* was spacious enough to hold and shelter all our people. As soon as I learned this I shook off the snow that was on my head and ears and

*The Zard Sang pass, over the Koh-i-Baba, reaching some 12,000 feet.

went into the cavern, sending out to call in everybody who could be found near at hand.

A comfortable place was available for fifty or sixty. Those who had any eatables—stewed meat, preserved flesh or anything in readiness—brought them out. Thus we escaped from the terrible snow, cold and drift, into a wonderfully warm and safe place where we could refresh ourselves.

Next morning the snow had ceased falling. Moving out early, we trampled down the snow in the old way, and opened up a road. So we came to the top of the pass. As the summer road winds up at this point to steep ascents, we did not attempt it, but pushed down into the lower valley. Before we reached the valley floor the day ended.

We halted as we were in the defiles, and the cold that night was dreadful. Many lost their hands and feet from the frost. Kepek lost his feet, Sewanduk Turkoman his hands and Akhi his feet from the cold of that night. As soon as it was light again we moved down the ravine.

Although we knew we were off the road, yet, placing our faith in God, we descended along the precipices to the valley. It was evening prayer before we reached easier going in the valley. It was not in the memory of the oldest man that this pass had ever been descended when there was so much snow—or indeed that any one had crossed it in mid-winter. Although the depth of the snow had been a hardship, it was this very thing that brought us to our journey's end. If the snow had not been so heavy, how could we have crossed clefts and gullies where there was no road?* Our horses and camels must have fallen into the first crevasse.

It was bedtime prayers when we straggled in to the village of Yeke Auleng. The people of the place had seen us as we descended the heights, and carried us into their houses, bringing out fat sheep for us, quantities of hay and grain for the horses and plenty of wood and dried dung to kindle fires. For days we had had no fire.

To pass from the cold and snow into a village of warm houses, to find good bread and mutton as we did, is a joy that can be understood only by those who suffered such hardships.

WE RESTED ourselves and the horses one day at Yeke Auleng and marched on. Word was brought in that the wandering Turkoman Hazaras had pitched their winter quarters with their families and flocks and goods on the line of my march. A body of them, posting themselves in a narrow defile, had checked my advance riders with arrows.

When I rode forward to investigate I saw that there was really no defile, but some of the Hazaras had gathered with their belongings in a gully on a steep knoll and were shooting arrows at our men. My followers who had tried to pass the height were falling back in confusion. I joined them and tried to encourage them, calling out—

"Stand—stand!"

No one would heed me. They scattered to different places and one of them shouted to me—

"Arrows are flying near your head."

"Be you bold!" I assured him. "Many arrows have passed near my head."

And I added that retainers were kept to serve their master in time of need, not to look on while their master marched alone against the enemy. Although I had not put on my helmet, or horse's mail, or my armor, and had only my bow, I spurred on my horse.

When my men saw me making for the foe, they followed. Reaching the hill where the Hazaras stood, they began to make their way up, partly on horseback, partly on foot, without minding the arrows. As soon as the Hazaras saw that my men were in earnest, they did not venture to stand, but took to flight. Our people hunted them up the hills like deer. Such property as was abandoned, we took, with some of the sheep.

Keeping to the ridges of the hills, we drove off herds of the tribe's horses. When it all ended fourteen or fifteen of the robber chieftains of the Hazaras had fallen into our hands. I had intended to put them to death; but Kasim Beg, happening to meet them, was filled with untimely compassion and let them go.

*Babar's recklessness in crossing the Hindu-kush was rewarded. His determination to share the lot of his men, even at risk to his own life, earned their steadfast loyalty. Alone among Oriental monarchs of his age, he could raise armies of nobles, warriors and wanderers by lifting his standard. His personal courage was almost unmatched. Once, when reduced to dire straits, he challenged an enemy chieftain to a mounted duel. The chieftain declined, but five of his champions accepted. Babar met them in turn, killing or disabling all of them. This incident, by the way, is not to be found in his memoirs.

CHAPTER III

REBELLION AT KABUL

WHILE we were plundering the Hazaras, a messenger came up from Kabul. The flame of revolt had arisen in my city.

I had left Mohammed Hussain Mirza, my uncle-in-law, in charge as governor. With him was Khan Mirza, my cousin.

With the aid of the princess imperial, my grandmother, these twain had won over the Moghul warriors to them, after spreading a report that I, the king, had been seized in Khorassan and carried away to the Eagle Castle at Herat. Many of my people believed that I was dead, and the tribes were in tumult.

My own officers had behaved very well. They had put the citadel of Kabul in shape to resist a siege, and had withdrawn into it with the loyal forces. The rebels held the city and had attacked the citadel for twenty-six days.

Upon this I wrote the tidings of my arrival and sent the missive to my officers by a servant of Kasim Beg. To this man I explained the plan I would follow.

I was to circle to the north and descend by the Ghur Pass, marching on swiftly and taking the enemy by surprize in the rear. The signal of my coming was to be a fire kindled on the Minar hill, and my officers were to answer my approach by a fire in the summit of the old kiosk in the citadel. When we attacked the rebels, they were to sally out. Such were the instructions I gave the servant of Kasim Beg.

Next morning we pressed on swiftly—those of us who were able to keep in the saddle. Mounting again before day, we descended the pass of Ghur the following evening and halted in a valley where there was no snow and we could wash and rest the horses.

But as soon as we pushed on the snow became deeper; near Minar Hill the cold became bitter. Here I sent two men to the Begs in the citadel, to let them know we were coming to keep our agreement and to order them to be on the alert. After surmounting Minar Hill we were forced to kindle fires to warm ourselves, or the frost would have made us powerless to move. This was not the place where we were to kindle the beacon fire, but we were unable to stand the cold.

Dawn was near at hand when we set out up the slope toward the city, the snow reaching to the horses' thighs. The drifts were deep and such of our people as wandered from the track fared badly. Sinking in the snow and climbing out, we reached the gates of Kabul without being discovered, and at the appointed time.

Before then we had seen a fire blazing in the citadel, and knew that my officers were prepared. When we passed through the outskirts I sent the right wing of my forces to seize the Mulla Baba bridge. With the center and left I advanced through the caravanserais, into a deserted garden. We had gone forward as far as Mulla Baba's garden when my outriders brought back to me, wounded and unhorsed, a party that had pushed on ahead.

This detachment of four warriors had gone boldly to Khan Mirza's house, seeking my cousin, one of the leaders of the rebels. Without halting, they had run into the palace. The alarm had been given and all was uproar. Khan Mirza mounted his horse, galloped off and escaped from the city.

My four men had been cut up by his followers, and were smarting from saber and arrow wounds. We had reached a dark alley where our horsemen were crowded together. Some of the enemy had come into the alley and made a stand, so that we could not go forward, or turn to go back.

I asked the men nearest me to dismount and open a way with their arrows, and at this the rebels were shaken and withdrew. We formed again in the saddle and waited—it seemed a long time—for the coming of my garrison from the citadel. Before they joined us the enemy had been driven from most of the streets. I made my way toward my cousin's palace, and fell in with the two men I had sent into the citadel, who were seeking the king. They led me into the garden from which Khan Mirza had fled.

Here, at the gate, Dost Sirpuli—a man to whom I had shown great favor in Kabul on account of his bravery—appeared with a naked sword in his hand and made at me. I had put on my quilted vest, but not my mail or helmet.

"Ho, Dost! Ho, Dost!" I called out, and spoke to him.

But the snow and the darkness confused him, or he was too bewildered by the fighting to know me, and came on without pausing, slashing at my bare arm. By the

mercy of God, the blade turned and did not injure me. When my followers cried out at him, the man ran off.

Leaving this place, we sought Mohammed Hussain Mirza at the Little Garden where he lived. In a breach of the garden wall seven or eight archers had made a stand. I spurred my horse at them before my men came up, and they lacked the courage to keep to their post. One of them I reached and cut down. He went spinning off in such a way, I imagined his head had been severed from his body, and passed on.

As I came up to the door of Mohammed Hussain Mirza's house a Moghul who had been in my service rose up from where he had been sitting. He fitted an arrow to his bow and aimed at me.

"That is the king!"

A cry arose on all sides, and he shifted his aim, loosed the arrow and made off. The time for shooting had gone by and the rebel chieftains were fleeing, so what was gained by his one arrow?

The Mirza, my uncle-in-law, had hid himself away somewhere.

While search was being made for him, I ordered away one of the chieftains who had held the citadel, to pursue Khan Mirza. The townspeople and rabble of the city had taken to their clubs and were making a riot as usual. We sent out patrols to disperse them and drive them from the streets while I went to the residence of the princesses imperial, my grandmother and the wife of Mohammed Mirza.

I found them sitting together in the same house—one of the finest properties of Kabul that I had given my grandmother, who, nevertheless, had influenced my kindred to take up the sword against me. I had never failed in duty or service to the princesses and had cared for them when they came to me.

Now I alighted from my horse where I had always done, and went up to them, saluting them with accustomed respect. They were greatly alarmed, dismayed and ashamed. I tried to overcome their uneasiness, but they could only talk incoherently, without making excuses or the proper inquiries after my health.*

*"The Emperor without ceremony and quite cheerfully saluted his step-grandmother who had set up her own grandson as king in his stead. She was abashed and knew not what to say. Saying 'What right has one child to be angered because the motherly affection descends on another?' he laid his head on the lap of the imperial princess and tried to sleep. He acted thus to reassure her." (From the account of the chief conspirator's son.)

All the while my uncle-in-law was hidden in their dressing chambers, where he had concealed himself in a roll of carpets. When I had written letters to the tribes, announcing my return and safety, I mounted my horse and rode to the citadel.

There Mohammed Hussain Mirza was brought before me. One of my officers had heard that he had taken fright and hidden himself in the apartments of the princess, and went to seek him, using impolite language in the women's palace. My uncle-in-law was unrolled from his rugs and carried to me in great fear.

I rose at his coming in and greeted him with my wonted respect. Had he been cut to pieces or tortured to death he would only have met with his just deserts; as he was kin to me I gave him his freedom and permission to set out for Khorassan.

In spite of all, this ungrateful coward went to my enemy, Shaibani Khan, and abused me—who had spared his life. It was not long before Shaibani Khan avenged me by putting him to death.

Meanwhile the party who had been searching for Khan Mirza, my cousin, found him among some hillocks outside the city and brought him before me a prisoner. He had lacked wit to flee or courage to fight. I was sitting at the time in a portico of the Hall of Audience, and said—

"Come and embrace me."

He was so agitated he fell down twice while trying to come and make his obeisance. After we had saluted I seated him at my side. They brought in sherbet. I drank of it first in order to reassure him. After a few days I allowed him to depart to Khorassan. When Shaibani Khan overwhelmed the two princes of Khorassan and stormed Herat, Khan Mirza fled to me again and I received him as if nothing had come between us.

Indeed, by then the Uzbek Khan had sent most of my family to the mercy of God, and in all our kingdoms there was no place for a son of Tamerlane.*

Indeed, at this time I held a council of all who adhered to me and it was clear that the Uzbeks and Shaibani Khan had grasped forever the countries under the rule of my

*Shaibani Khan, the Tiger's great adversary, was cut down in battle with the Persians soon after this. But the Uzbeks and now the Persians were too strongly entrenched in Babar's former kingdoms to be driven out—although the young king made one last effort to do so. Having failed to make himself king in Samarkand, he decided hopefully to conquer India—a country still unknown to him.

family for so long, and that, after ten years of struggle, I could not cope with the Uzbeks. My enemy was powerful, I was weak, and alone in Kabul.

So it was decided to journey to a country farther from the Uzbeks—to Hindustan.

In the end of this year when the sun was in Aquarius, my son was born. A few days afterward I gave him the name Humayun. I went to the king's garden and celebrated the festival of his birth. My people who were nobles and those who were not, great and small, brought their offerings. I never before saw so much white money piled up. It was a very splendid feast.

Until now no member of Tamerlane's family had assumed the title of Emperor. In this year I ordered that my people should address me as Emperor.

CHAPTER IV

DOWN THE KHYBER

ON A Friday in the autumn of 1525, when the sun was in the sign of the Archer, I set out on my march to invade Hindustan.

The reason for my decision to move out of my kingdom of Kabul was this—Kabul is a small country. Last year, with difficulty and by constant exertions the wandering tribes and the men who served me had been sheltered and provided for at Kabul. There was not sufficient grazing land for the flocks of sheep and herds of brood mares; nor had the tribes proper wintering places.

From the time when I conquered Kabul, twenty-two years ago, until now, I had always thought of mastering Hindustan. Sometimes by the misconduct of my nobles, sometimes by the opposition of my younger brothers, I was prevented from starting out, although I had raided three times into the Five Rivers. At length all obstacles were removed. There was no one, great or small, who uttered a word against my plan. I had already stormed and taken the fort of Bajaur beyond my border, and now intended advancing along the Kabul river, through the Khyber Pass to Peshawar.

We set out and descended the passes to the river. We had always been accustomed to halt at Kerik Arik. I embarked on a raft with the companions who were near me. On coming abreast Kerik Arik, though we looked in every direction, not a trace of the camp nor of our horses was visible. Yet ten thousand men had been collected to follow my standard and must be somewhere not far off.

It came into my head that there was a shady, sheltered spot a little way down the river and the army had probably halted there. I went on to that place and reached it when the day was far spent. Still not even a camp-follower was to be seen. Without stopping, I went on all next day and night, only halting the raft while I took some sleep.

In the boat were many men who could make verses, and it was agreed that we should all compose verses out of hand to a certain measure, to pass the time. As we had been very merry, I repeated this made-up couplet:

"What can be done with a drunken sot like you?
Why should we listen to a sorry she-ass?"

Before this whatever had come into my head in the way of rhyming, however bad or foolish, I had written down. No sooner had I composed these last lines than my heart was struck with regret at the unworthiness of it all. And from that time I gave up satirical and idle versification. I resolved to have nothing more to do with such unworthy writing and to break my pen.

About the time of early morning prayers we decided to land and await word from my men. And at sunrise the warriors began to appear coming in. They had been for two days in camp around Kerik Arik, although we had not observed them.

After two or three days' march I halted at Ali Masjid.* Owing to the narrowness of the pass at this place, I was always accustomed to take up my quarters on a near-by height; the army camped in the valley. As the hillock on which I pitched my tents overlooked the length of the pass, the blaze from the fires in the camp below was wonderfully brilliant and beautiful. Pleased by this, I had formed the custom of drinking wine whenever I halted on this ground.

Before sunrise I ate some *hashish*, and we marched on until we came to Peshawar, and then halted for another day while I went out to hunt the rhinoceros. We crossed the Black River in front of Peshawar and spread the hunting ring down the river. When we had gone a short way a man came

*Midway down the Khybur gorge, where the British now have a fort.

after us with word that a rhinoceros had entered a little wood near the town. At once we turned and galloped toward the wood and cast a ring around it.

Instantly, when we raised the shout, the rhinoceros plunged out into the plain and took to flight. Humayun, my son, and those who had come with him from the northern hill districts, had never before seen a rhinoceros, and were greatly amused.

They followed it for nearly two miles, shot many arrows at it and finally brought it down. This rhinoceros was poor sport, not making a good set at any rider.

I had often amused myself with wondering how an elephant and a rhinoceros would behave if brought face to face. When the beaters started up another rhinoceros near the wood, the elephant-keepers were ordered to bring out the elephants, so that one of them fell right in with the horned beast. But as soon as the elephant was started forward, the rhinoceros turned and fled.

The elephant was still a curiosity to most of my men. It is an immense animal, standing eight to ten feet, and of great sagacity. The Hindustanis call it *Hathi*, and capture it when young and wild, training it to understand what is said to it and to obey all commands.

In fighting, the elephant makes use of his two powerful tusks, with which he is able to tear up trees; the natives of Hindustan place great reliance on their elephants, and each division of their armies has a fixed number of the beasts—which are useful otherwise in carrying great quantities of baggage, in fording rivers, or drawing guns. Two or three elephants can draw a gun that it takes four hundred men to drag. I had few elephants and these were not used in battle; but the Hindustanis would without doubt send scores of them against my men.

The rhinoceros is another huge beast. It has a horn over its nose a span in length; out of one such horn I had a drinking vessel made and a dice box, and still some was left over. The hide of this beast is very thick. If a powerful bow be drawn to the armpit with all a man's strength, the arrow, if it pierces the hide at all, will enter only three fingers' breadth. Later in the expedition I frequently killed the rhinoceros with such a bow from horseback. In these hunts many men and horses were gored by the beasts' horns—once the horse of a young warrior named Maksud was tossed a full spear's length—whence he got the name of "Rhinoceros Maksud."

The tiger is better sport. Several years before on this same ground we heard a tiger howling where the road leaves the river. It soon sprang out of the underbrush. As soon as our horses heard the tiger's cry they became unmanageable and ran off, down gullies and over ravines. The tiger retreated again into the jungle.

I directed that a buffalo be brought and tied near the brush to lure him out, and before long he came forth again, howling. Arrows poured in on him—I also shot my arrow. One of the men near me rode up and struck him with a spear; the tiger twisted it and broke the point of the spear with his teeth and tossed it away. Wounded in many places, the beast crawled into a patch of brushwood. Another warrior dismounted and, drawing his sword, went into the brush. Just as the tiger sprang, my follower slashed him on the head, and another warrior pierced him in the loins. Still, he had strength enough to crawl to the river, where they killed him. After they had dragged him out of the water I ordered the skin to be taken.

That same day I lost my best hawk. Sheikham, the chief huntsman, had the charge of it. It took hawks and herons excellently. Two or three times before then it had flown away; this time it did not come back. It had pounced so unfailingly on its quarry that it made even a man with so little skill as I the best of fowlers.

I HAD never before been so far into the *germsil*, the countries of a hot climate, nor the land of Hindustan. Immediately on coming out of the hills I beheld a new world. The grass was different, the trees different, the birds of a strange plumage and the manners and customs of the wandering tribes altogether of another sort. I was struck with astonishment, and indeed there was room for wonder.

While the army was being ferried over the river near Peshawar we had an inspection and listed the men by commands—as my son Humayan and the gifted leader Kwajah Kilan had only recently joined us with their men from the hills. Great and small, warriors and servants, the army amounted to twelve thousand—Moghuls and allies.

As it had been a dry season in the Five Rivers, we moved through the foothills toward the southeast, to lay in a supply of corn. The Hindustanis had begun to gather ahead of us, and when my servants and men of all ranks were out searching for grain many of them were cut off. This was because my men were more intent on combing the countryside for prisoners than on bringing in the grain.

The day we halted I sat down with a few companions to drink *arak*. Mulla Muhammad of Parghar told us a great many stories. Said Kasim also liked his cup, and when once he started in became noisy from morning until night.

In the Afghan country Said Kasim and Dost Muhammad Bakir once had gone out of the camp, after drinking. Said Kasim was so drunk that two of his servants had to put him on a horse and hold him in the saddle until they got back to our lines.

But Dost Muhammad was so far gone that his companions were unable to get him on a horse. They poured a great quantity of water over him, without result. At this very moment a party of Afghans came in sight. Anim Terkhan, who was also very drunk, gravely gave it as his opinion that rather than leave Dost to fall into the hands of the enemy in that condition, it would be better to cut off his head and carry it away to safety.

Those who were more sober, however, contrived to cast Dost bodily over the horse, which they led along to camp.

In Hindustan I had formed the custom of going upon a boat to drink. Both the bow and stern of these boats were roofed over, giving a place for sitting. On one of these occasions, in a very pleasant spot I had some fourteen officers for companions, and we drank spirits until after noon prayers, and then we began eating *majaun*.* Those who were at the other end of the vessel did not know we were taking *majaun*, and kept on drinking spirits. About night prayers we left the vessel and mounted our horses, returning late to camp.

Two of my officers, thinking I had been taking nothing but spirits and imagining that they were doing me an agreeable service, brought me a pitcher of liquor, carrying it by turns on their horses.

"Here it is," they said. "Dark as the night is, we have brought a pitcher. We carried it by turns."

They were told we had no use for the pitcher, although they were extremely drunk and jovial when they brought it in. The drug-eaters and spirit-drinkers are very apt to take offense with each other.

"Don't spoil the party," I told them. "Whoever wishes to drink spirits, let him drink spirits; and let him that prefers *majaun* take *majaun*."

Some sat down to one, some to the other. But the spirit-drinkers soon began to make provoking remarks on *majaun* and hemp-eaters. There was much uproar and wrangling.

We resumed drinking spirits in the boat until bedtime prayers, when, being completely drunk, we mounted our horses. Taking torches in our hands, we came at full gallop from the riverside back to the camp, falling sometimes on one side of the horse, sometimes on the other. I was miserably drunk, and next morning when they told me I had galloped into the camp waving a lighted torch, I had not the slightest recollection of it.

But it was not now a fitting season for intoxication. I passed the river Jhilam by the ford. After sending word to the *ameers* of my garrison in Lahore to join me, I camped on the river Chenab, halting one day to rest my horses.*

AT THAT time the whole empire of Hindustan from the Jhilam to the Ganges was in the hands of the Afghan dynasty. Their prince was Sultan Ibrahim, the son of Sultan Iskander. In his hands was the throne of Delhi.

His army in the field was said to number a hundred thousand men, and his elephants —including those of his *ameers*—were nearly a thousand. More than once he had driven in my allies when his elephants trampled them. Even the eastern kings of Jaunpur, whose forefathers had been cupbearers to a great race of Sultans, had fallen into the power of the Afghans—

*A preparation of hemp, called sometimes hashish, after the Assassins of Persia, who were devotees of the drug. Only the mullahs, kwajahs and exceedingly devout Muhammadans abstained from wine in this age. Babar drank no wine until middle age, but went to it with a vim when he began. He had a remarkable constitution and would appear in the saddle before daybreak after successive nights of drinking and drug-taking.

*Babar's line of march was almost due southeast from Kabul. He skirted the border of modern Kashmir and the foothills of the Himalayas, crossing all of the five rivers of the Punjab. Sultan Ibrahim was assembling his host near Delhi and gave battle to the Tiger at Panipat, some fifty miles north of that city.

although at that time some of the eastern *ameers* were in rebellion. The resources of Hindustan could raise an army of five hundred thousand men.

The kingdoms that depended on me were the tribal holdings under the Hindu-kush, and the mountain dominions of Kabul and Kandahar, but these countries could not furnish me with adequate grain and resources for a campaign—indeed to some of them I was then obliged to send assistance. My men and their followers of all descriptions numbered twelve thousand.

Yet, placing my trust in God and leaving behind me my ancient foes, the Uzbeks of Turkestan, I advanced to meet Sultan Ibrahim, lord of great hosts and emperor of wide domains. During the beginning of our march we had been troubled by ice and cold; now it rained incessantly and was so cold that many of the starving country people died.

South of the Sutlej River tidings reached us that Sultan Ibrahim, who lay this side of Delhi, was advancing, and that two strong detachments of his army were moving toward us. I sent men toward Ibrahim's camp, and others toward his advance force commanded by Hamid Khan to find out what they were doing.

The next day Humayun, who led the right wing, with Kwajah Kilan, set out with his lighter force to take Hamid Khan by surprize if possible. Humayun detached a hundred or a hundred and fifty picked warriors to go before him. On Monday this advance detachment sighted the enemy and hung upon their flanks until Humayun came up with his troops. No sooner were these seen than the enemy took to flight. Our warriors cut down one or two hundred of the Hindustanis—cut off the heads of some and brought the others alive into camp with seven or eight elephants.

Mirak Mughul Beg brought word of this victory of Humayun's to my camp. On the spot I ordered a complete dress of honor, a horse from my own stable, with a reward in money to be given to the bearer of the good news.

When Humayun reached the camp with his prisoners and waited on me, I ordered Ustad Ali, the chief of cannons, and the matchlock men to shoot all the prisoners as an example. This was my son's first expedition and the first service he had seen. It was a very good omen. At this same place the razor was first applied to Humayun's beard.*

The sun had entered Aries, while we moved on until we sighted the low banks of the Jumna, and held down the river for two marches. I crossed the Jumna by a ford and rode on a bit to inspect the country. We came upon a fountain from which a small stream flows—rather a pretty place. As one of my Begs praised it highly, I said, "Yours be it!" Sometimes, raising an awning in a boat, we drifted down the broad stream of the river, exploring the creeks and inlets.

One day we had tidings that six or seven thousand of the enemy horse had encamped across the river on a road leading toward us. Chin Timur Sultan, the son of my uncle, the Little Khan and one of the most experienced of the Moghul officers, and the whole of the left wing, crossed the river and pressed on, taking the Hindustanis by surprize. The enemy fled, and seventy or more prisoners and six or eight elephants were brought back to me.

Here I arranged the whole army in order of battle, and reviewed it. Following the custom of Roum (the Osmanli Turks) I ordered the wagons of the army to be linked up with twisted bulls' hides as well as chains. Between the guns were placed six or seven woven shields, and behind these the matchlock men stood. For five or six days we labored getting ready the breastwork and barriers. After every part was finished I called together all the *ameers* and men of experience and held a council.

We agreed that the city of Panipat would cover our right flank with its walls and houses; the wagons and cannon would protect our center, where the infantry would be placed. On the left and in various other places we dug ditches and threw up obstacles of tree-boughs. At the space of every bowshot an interval in the defenses was left, large enough for a hundred or more men to issue through.

The right wing was commanded by Humayun, with Kwajah Kilan. Many of our best officers were posted here. Chin Timur Sultan, the Moghul, had the right of the center. On the extremity of the two

*In the Turki MSS of the Memoirs the following note appears at this place: "As my honored father mentions in these commentaries the occasion of his first using the razor, in humble emulation of him I have] noted down the same circumstance. I was then eighteen years of age. Now I, Muhammad Humayun, am transcribing a copy of these Memoirs from the manuscript in his late majesty's handwriting."

wings I had stationed picked Moghul mounted archers to form the *tulughma*, or swoop. As soon as the enemy approached near our lines, they were to fetch a wide circle and come upon the Hindustanis' rear.

At this council Dervis Muhammad Sarban said to me—

"You have fortified our ground in such a way that the Sultan will not even think of attacking such a position."

"You judge him by the Khans and the Uzbeks," I answered. "It is true that when we fortified ourselves in Hissar the Uzbek Khans, who knew well the proper time to attack and saw that we meant to defend the place with our lives, retired and left us. But you must not judge the Hindustanis by the Uzbeks. They do not know when to go forward and when to retire."

Sultan Ibrahim, indeed, seemed to be a man of no experience. He was slothful in his movements; he marched without order, halted without reason and engaged in battle without foresight. He had in his hands the accumulated treasures of his father and grandfather, in current coin ready for use. It is a custom of Hindustan in cases like this to hire soldiery. Had he exerted himself and parted with some of his treasure he might have had a hundred thousand more followers. Still, he had a great host and nearly a thousand elephants.

Many of my men were in terror. Fear is always harmful. Whatsoever Almighty God has decreed from all eternity can not be changed—though, at the same time, I could not greatly blame them.

They had come two or three months' journey from their own country; we were about to engage in arms a strange nation that did not understand our language.

It happened as I had foretold.

For seven days we fortified ourselves in Panipat, and during that time a very few of my riders galloped up to the enemy camp and discharged their arrows without being set upon. Some Hindustani *ameers* who were serving with me persuaded me to send four or five thousand men to a night attack. This did not turn out well.

The detachments did not get off properly. The day dawned, yet they lingered near the enemy camp until it was broad day. Then the Hindustanis beat their kettle-drums, started out their elephants and marched forth. Although this great force hung close upon our men, no one was killed. I sent Humayun with his division to cover their retreat. The parties of the night raid fell in with Humayun and returned safely. None of the enemy came near us.

The next night we had a false alarm. For nearly half an hour the call to arms and uproar kept up. The inexperienced warriors were confused and dismayed, but the lines quieted down at last.

By early morning prayers, when the light was strong enough to distinguish one thing from another, word was brought from our advanced patrols that the Hindustani host was coming on, drawn up in battle order.

We, too, braced on helmets and armor and mounted.

When the first groups of the enemy were visible through the mist, they seemed to be moving in strength against the right wing. I detached the Master of Horse from the reserve, to reinforce the right.

Sultan Ibrahim's army, from our first glimpse of it, moved forward at a rapid pace without halting. When they came near enough to see my troops drawn up in order, behind defenses, they halted as if pondering: "Shall we stop, or not? Shall we go on, or not?"

The masses behind them pressed them on, but without the same speed as before. I sent gallopers at once to the flanking divisions, with orders to wheel around the Hindustanis' flanks and to attack immediately at the rear. The *tulughma* riders accordingly wheeled to the rear of the enemy and began to loose flights of arrows. Mahdi Kwajah, a very brave man, rode ahead of the left flankers. A body of foemen with one elephant advanced to meet him. The Kwajah held his ground, and my men, coming up behind him, forced the Hindustanis to draw back.

Hearing of this, I dispatched four officers with their men from the center to assist this left wing. The battle began to grow obstinate on the right. Thereupon I ordered detachments to advance through the gaps left in the breastworks and engage the enemy in the center which had remained passive.

By now Ustad Ali, the master of cannon, was firing his *feringhi* pieces to good purpose, and the other cannoneers to the left were making effective play with their thunderers.

Meanwhile the *tulughma* flankers had gained the rear of the enemy in strength and were hotly engaged with their bows. The

Hindustanis made one or two very poor charges on the ditches and abatis in front of our right and left. My men plied them with arrows and drove them back on their center. Their wings being thus broken up and huddled with the main body, the enemy was in confusion, unable to set his masses in motion, forward or back.

The sun, which had mounted spear-high when the onset began, now was near to its height. Seeing the enemy disordered I had led forward my fresh and unbroken main body, and by the grace of Almighty God this great host of foemen was laid in the dust in half a day.

Ibrahim, the king of Delhi, was found under a heap of the slain, and five or six thousand of his men lay near him in the center of the field. Once the enemy fled in all quarters, we pursued with the mounted divisions, slaughtering and making prisoners. Fifteen or sixteen thousand Hindustanis had fallen that day. *Ameers* and Afghans began to come in, disarmed and prisoners. Elephants and their drivers streamed into my camp and were offered to me by their captors.

Having pursued them for some distance and supposing that Ibrahim had escaped with his life, I detached a strong party of my personal followers to pursue him as far as Agra. Then we passed through Ibrahim's camp, visiting his towering pavilions and quarters, and we pitched our camp on the river's side to rest our horses for a day before setting out for Delhi.

Being curious to see the beautiful buildings of which I had heard many times, I rode out to visit the tomb of a reverend *kwajah* near-by, the palace of Sultan Ala ed-din, and his minaret, and the royal tanks and gardens. After this I went back to the camp and entered a boat, where we drank spirits. I gave to two officers who were most deserving the governing of Delhi.

On Friday Moulana Mahmud made his way into Delhi to Friday prayers and read the *khutbeh** in my name, distributing handfuls of money amongst the fakirs and beggars and returning to the camp.

A week later I entered the suburbs of Agra, whither Humayun had preceded me. Of their own free will the Hindu clans and families which had been shut up in this city presented to my son a tribute-offering of many jewels and precious stones.

Among these was one famous diamond which had been acquired by Sultan Ala ed-din. It is so valuable that a judge of diamonds valued it at half the daily expense of whole world.* Its weight is about eight *miskals*. When I arrived Humayun presented it to me as a tribute-offering, and I gave it back to him as a gift.

I then entered Agra and took up my residence at Sultan Ibrahim's palace.

CHAPTER V

DOMINION

AT ONCE I began to examine and distribute the treasure. I gave Humayun seventy *lakhs* from it, and a palace. To some of my lords I gave eight *lakhs*, to others less—on the allies, the Afghans, Hazaras, Arabs and Baluchis, that were in the army I bestowed gifts. Every merchant, every man of letters, every person who had come with me into Hindustan, carried off presents, rejoicing in his good fortune.

All my relations and friends in my homeland had gifts sent to them, great and small, and to every person in Kabul I gave one silver coin as a gift.

When I came to Agra it was the hot season. Many of the inhabitants fled from terror, taking their grain with them; others hid it away, so that we could not find enough provender for ourselves or the horses. The peasantry of the countryside avoided my men, and the townspeople were hostile at first.

The villages had taken to thieving and robbery. The roads became impassable. It happened that the heat in this season was uncommon, and many men dropped down as if they had been struck by the *simun* wind, and died where they fell.

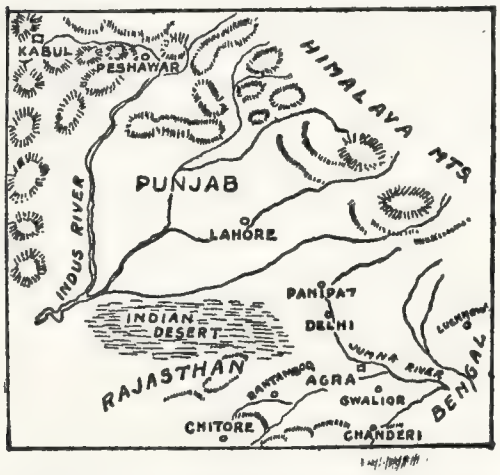
Although the country of Hindustan is populous and rich, it has few pleasures. The people have no good-fellowship, as in the northern hills—no kindness, no good horses, or meats or fruits such as our grapes or muskmelons. They have no cold water or good bread in the bazaars, no baths—

**Khutbeh*, prayer for the health and long life of the reigning monarch. Ibrahim being slain and his head presented to Babar, the Tiger saw to it that the prayer was read in his name.

* This may have been the "Great Moghul" or Koh-i-nur diamond, or the "Ocean of Light." The Hindus who presented it to Humayun were the family of the slain Raja Bikramajit, and their act was not altogether under compulsion. They were not allies of Ibrahim's Afghan dynasty, and Humayun had placed a guard over them to protect them from inevitable plundering at the hands of the Moslem inhabitants of the city.

not even a candle. Instead of a candle you have a gang of dirty fellows to follow you about with a kind of smoking lamp made of a wick in an iron vessel into which oil is poured.

The lower classes go about naked. They tie on a thing like a clout as a cover to their nakedness. In Hindustan even the time is



altered, as they divide a day into sixty parts instead of twenty-four. They measure each part by the dripping of water from a hole in a cup, and when the cup is filled they beat upon a brass basin in such a manner that a man awakened from sleep in the night by the beating of the basin does not know what hour it is. I directed that they should likewise beat the number of the night watch.

Most of the natives of the country are pagans, who are called Hindus. The greater part of them believe in the doctrine of transmigration, and the son often works at the trade of the father. For every kind of work there is a certain guild, and the multitudes of craftsmen is a great convenience. In Agra alone I employed on a new palace six hundred and eighty persons each day.

Their buildings are purposeless and ugly; they lack pools or canals in the gardens, and during the rainy season the dwellings are far from staunch. At this time heavy rain falls ten or twenty times in a day; bows and their strings become quite useless; coats of mail rust and books mold. It is pleasant enough between rains, but in the dry season the north wind always blows and there is an excessive amount of dust in the air. It grows warm during the signs of the Bull and the Twins, but not so warm as to be unbearable—not nearly the heat of the northern deserts.

THE heat had its effect on my men. Not a few of the Begs began to lose heart and complain of their suffering in Hindustan. Some made preparations to go back to the hills.

No one had behaved better or spoken more gallantly than Kwajah Kilan from the time we left Kabul; but a few days after the taking of Agra he was the most determined to go back.

As soon as I heard this murmuring among my men, I summoned all my Begs to a council, and spoke to them:

"After great hardships and exposure to danger we have routed our enemy and conquered the kingdoms we now hold. Empire can not be held without gathering the materials of war. To go back now to Kabul would be to retreat. What invisible foe compels us to give up the achievement of our lives?

"Let no one who calls himself my friend, ever speak of retreat. But if there is any among you who can not bring himself to stay, let him depart."

Nevertheless Kwajah Kilan was resolved to go, and it was arranged that he should have charge of the treasure I was sending to Kabul. He was heartily sick of Hindustan and at the time of going, wrote on the walls of a house in Delhi:

> If safe and sound I pass the Sindh,
> May the —— take me if I wish for Hind.

As some two or three thousand Afghan bowmen had come in to join me, and several of Sultan Ibrahim's officers had rendered allegiance to me, we had a great feast a few days after the end of Ramazan when the new moon first appeared. It was in the great hall of stone pillars under the dome of Sultan Ibrahim's dwelling palace. At this time I presented Humayun with a shawl of cloth of gold, a sword and a Kiptchak horse with a gold-adorned saddle. To Chin Timur Sultan and to Mahdi Kwajah I gave a similar shawl, with a sword and dagger—to the other lords and officers I gave according to their rank and merits.

Yet the feast lacked something of the high spirits of our northern banquets. Rain

fell heavily, and those who were seated outside the hall were thoroughly drenched.

From day to day I gave provinces and estates to those who had joined me, and sent them out forces to subdue the outlying chieftains.*

I had made up my mind to have running water in my new gardens of Agra, by building water-wheels at the river—and to lay out the gardens in better fashion. But the Jumna and the countryside was so ugly and detestable that I was disgusted. I was obliged to give up irrigating the countryside and to make the best of the palace gardens as they were.

First we sank a deep well and constructed baths at its edge, far below the surface of the ground. In every garden I sowed roses and narcissus and erected buildings out of white and red stone.

We were troubled by three things in Hindustan—heat, strong winds and the dust in the air. The baths gave us relief from all three. Some of my veteran officers began to follow my example with their new estates—building regularly, and not haphazard after the Hindustan fashion, which is merely to set up shelters of mud, branches and wood, and palaces without plan or beauty.

My companions made their gardens and water-wheels after the manner of Lahore, and the men of Hind, who had never seen so much elegance, called our new countryside Kabul.

I had asked Ustad Ali, the master of cannon, to cast a large piece for the purpose of battering some of the citadels that had not submitted. After working diligently at the forges he sent word to me that everything was ready. Ustad Ali was devoted to his cannon. We went out to see him cast his gun.

Around the place where it was to be cast were eight forges with all needed tools, in readiness. From each forge the men had made a channel that ran down to the mold in which the gun was to be cast.

On my arrival they opened the holes of all the different forges. The metal flowed down the channels, a glowing liquid, and entered the mold. After some time the flowing of the melted metal from the forges ceased, one after another, before the mold was full.

There had been some oversight in the forges or the supply of metal. Ustad Ali was in terrible distress; he was like to throw himself into the glowing metal that was in the mold. To cheer him up I gave him a dress of honor and contrived to lessen his shame.

Two days after, when the mold was cooled, they opened it. Ustad Ali, in great delight, sent to tell me that the shot chamber of the great gun was without a flaw, and that they could easily cast the powder chamber. Having raised the finished chamber, he set men to polish it, while he began anew at the forges to fashion the powder chamber.

Three months later the great gun was finished—the powder chamber having been perfectly cast—and Ustad Ali made ready to fire it. We went to see how far it would throw the ball. About afternoon prayers the piece was discharged and carried one thousand six hundred paces. I bestowed on Ustad Ali a dagger, a complete dress and a Kiptchak horse, to honor him.

WHEN winter came on again, a strange thing happened, in this wise—the mother of Ibrahim, an ill-fated lady, had heard that I had eaten some things prepared by natives of Hindustan. A few of Ibrahim's cooks had been kept at the palace to prepare dishes of Hindustan for me. The lady sent a girl slave to Ahmed the taster with a bit of poison wrapped up in paper, and another slave to watch the first. Ahmed gave it to one of the Hindustani cooks with the promise of four houses if he would throw it into my food.

Fortunately the poison was not thrown into the pot, because the Hindustani cooks were closely watched at the fires, but he tossed it into the tray that was to be carried in. My graceless tasters were not watching, and he was able to cast it upon some thin slices of bread. In his haste, he spilt about half the poison. Then he put some fried meat in butter on the bread.

On Friday, when afternoon prayers were over, the dinner was served. I was not aware of any unpleasant flavor, but when I had eaten a little smoke-dried meat I felt nausea. When I knew that I could not check the nausea I left the table. My heart rose in me and I vomited.

I had never before done that, even after

*Babar gave his officers and the new Afghan nobles palaces and districts that were still unconquered. Naturally, they set out with considerable zeal to take possession.

drinking heavily, and a vague suspicion crossed my mind. I ordered the cooks to be bound, and the meat to be given to a dog which was to be shut up immediately after. Next morning about the first watch the dog became sick, and his belly swelled. He would not get up even when he was poked with a stick. About noon he got up and recovered.

Two young men had also eaten of the meat, and one of them fell very sick. I ordered the cooks to be examined and at last all the details came to light.

On the next court day I directed all the grandees and the ministers to attend the *diwan* (council). The two guilty men and the two women were brought in and repeated all the plot. The taster was ordered to be cut into pieces. I commanded the cook to be flayed alive. One of the women was ordered to be trampled to death by an elephant, the other to be shot with a matchlock.

The lady* was deprived of her possessions and slaves and kept under guard. Some day her guilt will bring its retribution.

I had scoured myself inside with milk and the juice of the *makhtum* flower, and, thanks be to God, the illness had passed off. I did not realize until now that life was so sweet a thing. Whoever has ventured near the gates of death, knows the joy of life.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAND OF KINGS

AT THIS time messengers began to come, close upon each other, from Mahdi Kwajah to relate that Rana Sanga and the Rajputs were on the march.

Of all the pagan† princes Rana Sanga was the most powerful. He had won his conquests by his own valor and his sword. His original principality was Chitore. During the last wars he had seized such places as Rantambor, and Marwar. He was the chief of all the Rajputs.

When I entered Hindustan Rana Sanga, the pagan, had agreed with me that if I would march against Delhi he would advance from the other side against Agra. Yet when I defeated Ibrahim and took Delhi and Agra, the pagan did not move out of his forts.

At the edge of his country, yet near to Agra, was the city of Biana. The great cannon that Ustad Ali had fashioned was to batter down the walls of Biana. But when Rana Sanga marched with his army against Biana, the Khan of that place saw no remedy but to deliver up the fort to my troops.

I had sent Mahdi Kwajah to take command at Biana. In his messages he urged that a light force be hurried to his city in advance of my army. I sent the advance force, but it never reached the fort. The garrison of Biana had gone out toward the pagans with too little caution and had been routed.

When the affair began Kittah Beg came galloping up without his armor and joined in. He had dismounted a pagan and was about to grasp him when the Hindu snatched a sword from a servant of the Beg and struck my officer in the shoulder, wounding him severely. Long after, Kittah Beg recovered, but was never entirely well. Whether from fear or to excuse themselves all my people who came back from Biana bestowed unstinted praise on the courage and hardihood of the pagan army.

On a Monday in midwinter I began my march to the holy war against the heathen.

Of all the places before me, the water was best in the plains of Sikri, and thither I marched, in battle order, sending a galloper to Mahdi Kwajah with instructions to join me with the remnant of the Biana garrison. At the same time I sent out riders to watch the movements of the pagans.

The Hindus were marching toward us, and as soon as they had news of my advance detachment, which had pushed on incautiously ten or twelve miles from Sikri, four or five thousand of them fell upon my men, who stood their ground in spite of being outnumbered.

The moment I heard of this I detached a strong covering force under a veteran officer to cover their retreat. My men of the advance were badly cut up, lost a standard and

*Babar does not mention by name either the princess or her grandson—a forbearance remarkable in an emperor of Asia, or Christian Europe in the early sixteenth century. The war-ridden provinces of Hindustan were discovering that he was an able ruler, and many were submitting to him. One whole Afghan army came in and surrendered. He rewarded the newcomers royally. Babar was always generous, and did not care to hoard up a treasure for himself.

This allegiance of the fighting Afghan clans, and his splendid treatment of them, probably saved his throne in the coming struggle with the Rajputs.

†Hindu. The Rajputs were the most warlike of the races of India. They were chivalrous warriors, and experienced, if impetuous soldiers. Rana Sanga was old in years and wisdom, with fifty sword and lance scars on his body, blind in one eye, with an arm cut off and one leg crippled. Seven Rajas and a hundred chieftains, eighty thousand horse, and five hundred elephants were at his back. He was in all things a foeman to delight Babar.

had to flee for two miles before they reached the covering division. Many good men and officers were slain.

From all quarters word began to come that the enemy were close at hand. We buckled on our armor, arrayed our horses in their mail, mounted and rode out. After marching a mile or so we found that the enemy forces had drawn back.

As there was a large tank on our left, I camped in this place. We fortified guns and connected them with chains. Mustapha the Osmanli was very clever in arranging the cannon in the Turkish manner, but as Ustad Ali was jealous of him, I stationed him on the right with Humayun, keeping Ustad Ali with me. Where we had no guns the spade-men dug ditches.

And as we were greatly outnumbered, and my men disturbed by the bold charges of the pagans, I tried to make our position stronger by fashioning wooden barriers. I ordered things like tripods to be made of wood and fitted with wheels and chained together by ropes of twisted bull's hide. On these heavy tripods the matchlock men were to lay their pieces.

While my men were still alarmed and dispirited a rascally fellow, Muhammad Sherif, the astrologer, began to add to their fears. Instead of helping me, he pointed out to every one he met that Mars was in the west, and as we were going into battle from the east, we would assuredly be defeated.

Without listening to him, I went on fortifying the line and trying to get my men in a fit state to meet the enemy.

A day or two later, as I mounted to survey my position, I became moody during the ride. I reflected that I had put off the time of abstaining from my sins. Now that I had entered upon a holy war against infidels, I vowed to drink wine no more.

All my gold and silver drinking goblets I ordered broken up and given to the *dervishes* and the poor. I resolved to cease cutting my beard and allow it to grow. The wine that we had with us we poured out upon the ground. That night many of my *ameers* and warriors followed my example.

Meanwhile a general uneasiness prevailed in the camp. No one uttered a manly word. The *wazirs* who should have given good counsel and the *ameers* who were now masters of kingdoms alike did not utter a brave word. At last, when I observed this I called them together and spoke to them.

"Gentlemen and soldiers—every man that comes into the world must leave it. When we are gone, God alone survives, unchanged. Whosoever sits at the feast of life must drink the cup of death at the end. He who quarters himself at the inn of mortality must one day pass out of this house of sorrow—the world.

"It is better to die with honor than to live in shame. God has been good to us. If we die, death itself yields us immortal fame; if we live, we shall be the avengers of God. Let us swear by His great name that none of us will turn his face aside from the conflict until his soul is parted from his body."

Master and servant, great and small, swore the oath on the Koran. The effect of the oath was visible throughout the camp.

Yet at this moment danger threatened us. Districts and forts near and far fell into the hands of rebels and enemies. Another army of pagans blockaded Gwalior. Every day unpleasant news reached us, and the Hindustanis began to desert my army.

We let the fugitives go, but after a few days I decided that my men would be in better spirit if we advanced. I ordered forward my guns and the tripods, and the barricades, keeping the divisions of the army in battle array. The tripods had been placed on carriage wheels.

Ustad Ali was placed directly behind these machines, with the matchlock men, to keep communication between the real guns and the infantry behind him.

After the ranks were formed and every man in his place, I galloped along the line, speaking to each officer and giving each division instructions how to act.

The pagans were on the alert, and several parties of Rajputs drew out to observe us and advanced close up to us.

I did not intend to fight that day, and ordered the army to encamp, drawn up as it was, after moving two miles. At once we began to dig ditches and strengthen our barricades.

By way of taking an omen, I pushed on a few riders to skirmish with the enemy. They took a number of pagans and brought back their heads. This raised the spirits of my men.*

*Muhammadan warriors of this period were incurably anxious about the first omens of a battle. An initial success, however slight, was taken as assurance of victory. Babar knew this very well. And he needed all his vigilance during these trying days. Rana Sanga's army is recorded as numbering two hundred thousand. This is exaggerated, but the whole power of the Rajputs was in

Three days later we repeated the maneuver. We reached the ground we had selected and were pitching tents and working at the ditches when our outposts hurried in with news that the enemy was in sight. I mounted at once and gave orders that every man should go to his post and remain there, and the barriers around the guns be strengthened as much as possible.

ON THE field of Kanwaha near a hill our forces were mustered when the pagan standards appeared about the middle of the second watch in the morning. Few elephants were to be seen at first. The Hindus were all mounted and carried light spears, the riders being clad in finely wrought mail.

Immediately they launched an attack upon the extreme right wing, where Humayun held command. The charge of the mailed riders was sudden and earth-shaking.

Many of the most experienced *ameers* and the veteran Moghul warriors had been held in reserve behind the center. At once Chin Timur Sultan was sent at a gallop toward the right wing with a strong body of horse.

At the same time Mustapha Roumi began to fire the cannon between the center and right. He fired excellently well, and as the pagans had charged in close array the heavy balls shook them considerably.

Rana Sanga began to send divisions from his rear to succor his men at this point. Accordingly, three of my officers with half the remaining reserve were detached to aid Humayun. Dust began to rise and cover everything and the clangor was excessive.

So many pagans had pressed forward on our right that they were cut up by Mustapha's shots before they reached our line, and—though they hesitated not at all—their array became disordered and confused. At places they broke through our men, but they were pushed back by the charges of the reserve in a mass without form or order.

Meanwhile the pagans had made an even more desperate charge upon the left wing, and it was necessary to send the last of the reserve with all the Begs and my most trusted officer, Yunis Ali, to strengthen this wing. Already two or three hours had passed and the sun was at its height.

The Rajputs were undaunted. They were excellent swordsmen but their only maneuver was to charge, since they expected to sweep over the line of our shallow ditch and thin barricades.

They were unable to do this. Our matchlock men and infantry were not driven from their ground, and when this was apparent the two *tulughma*, the flanking parties that had been badly cut up in the first charges, were ordered to circle the pagan array, to the best of their ability.

Rustam Turkoman and many others penetrated as far as the rear of the Rajput masses, and used their bows with great effect. This could not be seen at the time, but the Moghul household troops and cavaliers of the center were beginning to chafe and to cry out that they wished to enter the fight.

Perceiving their excellent spirit, orders were given that the mounted divisions of the center, the mail-clad hosts of Moghuls, and the imperial standards should go forward. They advanced slowly through the gaps in the barricades and then put their horses to the gallop. As they were few and the Rajputs many, the infantry and matchlock men were also directed to go forward.

Until now Ustad Ali had been making play with his cannon, and an order was sent to him to drag his guns forward.

When my warriors on the flanks saw what was happening they also put their horses to the charge without instructions—for in the heat of the fight no messengers could be sent to those in command of the wings.

Although my divisions of the center were fresh, and although the Rajputs had been cut up by cannon fire, they did not fall into confusion or lose spirit, while such weight of numbers halted our men, and wearied them. The enemy spurred their horses forward desperately.*

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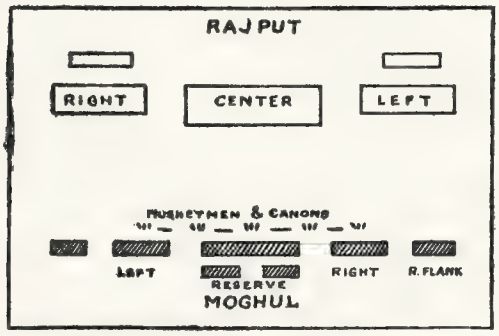
the field with ten thousand allies, followers of the dead Sultan Ibrahim. Babar had been deserted by his allies, and the odds of seven or eight to one were enough to awe even the fiery Moghuls. Never had an army been so confident of victory as the Rajputs.

(The account of the battle in the Memoirs is quoted from a rhetorical bombast of a certain Sheikh Zein, utterly different from the calm simplicity of Babar. In order to give any clear idea of the battle, it has been necessary to rewrite the version of the worthy sheikh, which begins after these paragraphs.)

*Seldom, if ever, had a Rajput army been defeated by inferior numbers. Their terrible overthrow at Kanwaha was due to Babar's generalship, and his maneuvering of the disciplined Moghuls. It marked, in Asia, the passing of the horseman as the supreme factor in battle—as Crecy and Agincourt had done in Europe. From the date of Kanwaha, February, 1527, no Rana of a reigning house in Rajputana took the field against the Moghuls. Rana Sanga kept the field, it is true, and vowed never to enter his city of Chitore except as a victor, but he died soon after and his successors began the usual quarreling among themselves. The overthrow of the Rajput chivalry made Babar master of India and gave a central government to that much-harried land, but the days of the Tiger were numbered and he did not long survive his victory.

They were swept away by the balls of the matchlock men, and went to their death by the way of the flashing simitar. And still others pressed against us, although the sun was no longer to be seen, and dust and

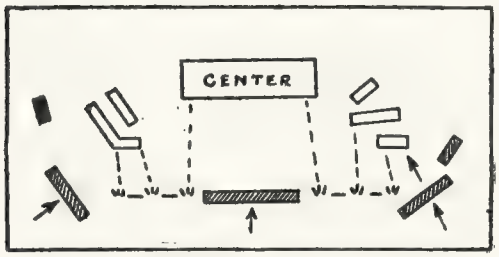


Rana Sanga planned to break the Moghul flankers on the right, and roll up the right wing, before the Moghuls could circle him.

smoke deepened the twilight that fell on the field of Kanwaha.

The line of our standards did not waver; the mailed hosts of Moghuls did not break, and these last charges of the enemy were hopeless. A more gallant army than the Rajputs' could not have been brought into the field, but it was an army no longer. So many Rajputs were slain that the others rode whither they could, without leaders or hope of life.

Rana Sanga was borne away severely wounded. Rawul Udai Singh and several princes, with as many chieftains of clans had



The reserve under Chin Timur Sultan strengthened the right flankers, and the firearms checked the attack on the right wing.

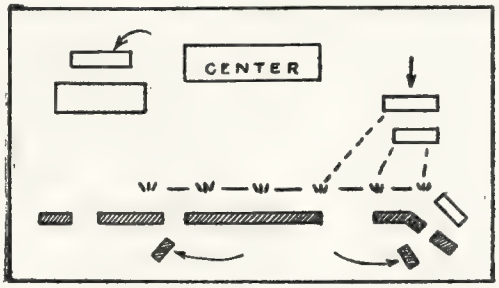
joined the host of the slain, and the roads from the field of battle were strewn with the wounded that died by the way.

The throngs of the fleeing passed between the arrows of our *tulughma* flankers, and wherever a rider went he looked down upon lifeless nobles in all their splendid garments —now food for the crows and the kites.

So the last blows were given, and the heads of the gallant pagans made into a mound. Darkness closed in, and the striker and the smitten, the victor and the vanquished were no longer to be seen. Only the earth itself, and its fruit of the dead, was to be seen under the stars of the night that ensued.

Once the enemy were defeated we pursued them with great slaughter.* Their camp might be three miles distant from ours. On reaching it, I halted to inspect it, sending on some officers to harry the pagans and cut them off, so that they could not reassemble. Here I was guilty of neglect.

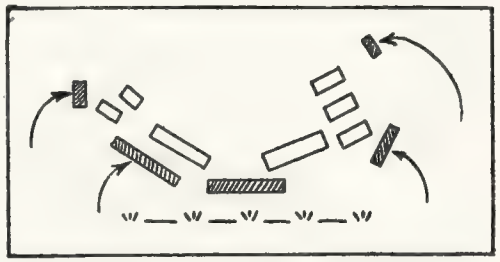
I should have gone on myself and not intrusted the pursuit to another. Nearly two miles beyond the enemy's camp I turned



The Moghuls pushed the Rajput left back on center, and advanced all along the line.

back, the day being spent, and reached my own about bedtime prayers.

The battle had been fought within sight of a hillock near our lines. On this mound I ordered a pyramid of the heads of the pagans to be raised. Immense numbers of the pagans had fallen, and we came upon bodies as far as Alwar and Mawat. At a council of my Begs it was decided not to go farther against the enemy, owing to want



The Rajputs made desperate attacks at all points, but lost all order, with half their leaders dead, and retreated stubbornly between the Moghul flankers.

*Babar is speaking again.

of water and the great heat of their desert country.

At this occasion, Muhammad Sherîf, the astrologer, who had obstinately predicted defeat, came to congratulate me on my victory.

I poured out abuse on him. When I had relieved my heart by it—although he was self-conceited and an insufferable evil-speaker he was an old servant—I gave him a *lakh* as a present and ordered him to leave my dominion.

INDEED there was much to be done, in spite of the oppressive heat. Owing to the war with the pagans I had been unable to divide up the country into districts or set to work building the tanks and wells; nor had the treasure been portioned off.

I had sent Humayun up to the hill district of Kabul. Every month brought some new rebellion, and I was troubled by fever and by the lack of wine. I had given it up because of repentance, but now I began to repent of giving it up.

God willing, I would have set out at once for the hills to join Humayun and Kwajah Kilan, the old general. How is it possible that the delights of the hills should ever pass from memory? Or that a man like me, who have made a vow of abstinence, should forget the delicious melons and the grape wines of my homeland?

Not long ago they brought me a single muskmelon from my home. While I was cutting it up I felt lonely as an exile. While eating it, I could not help shedding tears.

Although troubled by lack of sleep and thirst, I was unable to be out of the saddle for long, owing to the contests against the pagan lords who had retired to their strongholds without submitting to me.

Medini Rao, one of the chief followers of Rana Sanga, had shut himself up in the fastness of Chanderi with his Rajputs—a place that is desert and jungle and mountains in one. In the beginning of the next winter I set out against Chanderi.

The army was equipped and reviewed and we moved down the Jumna. After we had crossed the river, I sent Chin Timur Sultan on ahead with a strong body of six or seven thousand men.

We marched on, day after day, until in the district of Malwa the country became wild and pathless. Halting here, I sent on overseers and pioneers to level the road and to cut into the jungle growth on either side so the guns that were dragged by elephants and bullock teams could pass. Near a tank below Chanderi we encamped, and went ahead to survey the fortress.

It was a celebrated stronghold, built on a hill. The outer fortifications and the town lay half-way up the hill, the citadel at the summit. The main road—the only one by which cannon could be moved up—ran right under the outer walls of the town.

The country around was excellent, abounding in water and hunting places. And Chanderi itself is eye-filling. The houses were of stone, and beautiful. Instead of tiles, they were covered with flagstones. The citadel was hewn out of white stone. Nor did it lack water—beneath it a huge tank had been hollowed out of the rock. And a covered way led down to another large tank within the town.

Next morning I rode out and posted the different commands. Ustad Ali chose a level stretch of ground under the town wall to place his cannon. While some of the men dug emplacements for the big guns, others labored at making mantlets of hide and scaling ladders.

As Medini Rao was a man of authority and bravery, and one of the chief followers of Rana Sanga, I sent two officers to him to assure him of favor and forgiveness, and to offer him another stronghold for Chanderi. He was then in the citadel with some five thousand Rajputs.

Whether he mistrusted me, or put too much faith in the strength of his fort, I do not know, but the negotiations were broken off, and six days later we moved up to attack.

That same morning, just as we reached our ground, my chief minister brought me letters that had come in at dawn. The army of the east had been set upon by Afghan forces and routed; it had abandoned Lucknow and was falling back on Kanauj which was no more than a couple of days ride from Agra.

My minister was dismayed and alarmed and asked what was to be done.

"Confusion and doubt are useless," I assured him. "Except by God's will nothing happens. It is better to say nothing about the disaster in our rear, but to attack the fort at once and take it."

Now the pagans had drawn most of their

men into the citadel, which was thus strongly garrisoned, and the outer wall of the town had few to defend it. My men entered the outer fort easily, and after a slight resistance the pagans who had held it fled to the citadel.

I gave orders that every man should push on to the assault of the citadel as soon as my standard was lifted and the kettle-drum beaten. Then I went to see Ustad Ali's cannon play.

He fired off some of the larger battering pieces; but, his ground being level, the guns could not be elevated sufficiently. As the citadel works were hewn out of rock, the damage done was trifling. It was necessary, then, to storm the almost impregnable walls, and to do this without delay.

The weak point of the citadel was the covered run—the long tunnel of solid masonry that descended to the lower water-tank. This point had been assigned to my own household troops.

When the signal was given the citadel was assailed on all sides, but our real effort was made in the covered way. Here the pagans had placed picked men, and stones and flaming pots and beams were cast down on my warriors. Through the smoke and the flames and the weapon-play they pressed on and up, until Shahem Nur Beg climbed out of the covered way where it joins the main wall.

Elsewhere we had gained a footing in two or three places, and now the pagans in the water-run fled back into the citadel and we had taken that part of the works. My men pushed ahead at once, and the inner walls of the citadel were stormed more easily.

Then a strange thing happened.*

After a short pause in the fighting the Rajputs rushed out, without clothing of any kind, sword in hand. They fell upon my men in desperation and put many to the sword. But the pagans, who seemed to be bereft of all reason, began to leap over the ramparts, falling to their death on the stones below.

The cause of this desperate sally was that they had given up the place for lost. They had put to death all their wives, women and children. Resolving to perish, they had stripped themselves and rushed out. Their ungovernable desperation drove our people back along the ramparts.

Two or three hundred pagans had gone into Medini Rao's house, where numbers of them slew each other in the following manner. One person took his stand by the door, sword in hand, and the others crowded in and stretched out their necks, eager to die. In this way many went to ——, and I gained this famous fort without raising my standard or beating my kettle-drum, or using the full strength of my arms.

I gave Chanderi to one of my shahs, leaving him three thousand Moghuls and Hindustanis for support, and hastened by forced marches toward Agra and the north.

CHAPTER VII

THE TIGER FIGHTS WITH DEATH

A GOOD deal of mischief had been done in my absence. The remnant of my eastern forces had fallen back again from Kanauj and the rebels had stormed the fort of Shemsabad. We were delayed three or four days in crossing the broad Jumna, and when we neared Kanauj we learned that the Afghans had left the city and had recrossed the Ganges. They were drawn up on the east bank, believing that they would be able to keep my men from crossing. And they had collected all the boats for leagues up and down stream on their bank.

I went and camped on the west bank of the Ganges, and my men went out and seized some of the enemy's boats which they brought in.

But the boats were too few to serve any useful purpose, and the river could not be forded here. I sent for an officer who was skilled at construction work, and ordered him to throw a bridge across the Ganges and to requisition everything in the way of materials that he needed.

The Afghans were amazed at our preparations to throw a bridge across the Ganges and treated the whole thing with contempt. Their contempt and laughter was not as great when Ustad Ali brought up a gun to test out the range, and began his fire.

For several days he played his gun remarkably well. The first day he discharged it eight times, the second sixteen, and the third and fourth day he kept up this rate of firing.

*This was the *johur*, the terrible sacrifice that accompanied the loss of a Rajput stronghold. Usually the inner hall of the citadel was fired, after the women had shut themselves up in it, and the men, clad in saffron garments went out to slay and be slain. No one survived. In this case the swift attack of the Moghuls had hurried the ghastly preparations. Babar, who praised the bravery of the Rajputs at Kanwaha, has no praise for the *johur*.

The gun he fired was that same great piece called the *Dig Ghazi*—Victorious Cannon—that had been used in the battle against Rana Sanga, whence it got this name. Another piece, larger than this, had been planted, but it burst at the first fire, killing eight or ten men.

The matchlock men as well were active with their pieces and struck down a number of warriors and horses, including two of the royal slaves. They manned a breastwork that had been thrown up on the bank above the place where the bridge was to be. Below the bridge a swivel had been planted on an island, and harassed the Afghans.

But my warriors were not content with the firing of the cannon. About evening prayers one day two sultans with about fifteen men crossed over in a boat without any incentive except foolhardiness, and returned without fighting, having accomplished nothing at all. I reprimanded them for having crossed.

Malik Kasim, the Moghul, ventured across once or twice in a boat and had very creditable skirmishes with bodies of the Afghans. Yet, at length, after driving back a strong party, they were carried away by overconfidence and pursued the fugitives up to the lines of the Afghan camp. The enemy sallied out in strength and attacked him, driving his men back to their boat.

They climbed in hurriedly and pushed off, but before they could get clear, an elephant came up and swamped the boat. In this manner Malik Kasim perished.

All this while the floats of the bridge were being pushed steadily toward the Afghan bank, and as soon as the bridge was nearly finished I moved forward some light troops to hold it. As the Afghans had retired beyond range of Ustad Ali's cannon, these light troops—infantry and Lahoris—crossed over and skirmished a bit. Two days later part of my household warriors—my best men—supported by foot musketeers, went over the bridge.

The Afghans lost no time in mounting for battle, horse and foot and elephants, and attacked my division. At one time they made headway against my left flank, but the men in the center and right stood firm and soon drove the enemy from the ground.

Two of my warriors hurried on too eagerly and rode some distance beyond the body where they belonged. One of them was cut off, dismounted and taken on the spot; the other—man and horse—was wounded in several places. He fell, dying, and his horse, feeble and tottering, broke away and dropped dead when it reached its position in the party of my men.

That day seven or eight heads were brought in, and many of the enemy were wounded by arrows and matchlock balls. The fighting kept up sharply until afternoon prayers. And the whole night was spent in bringing back my scattered detachments across the bridge.

If that same evening I had moved forward my main forces, it is probable that most of the enemy would have fallen into my hands. But it came into my head that it would not do to trust fortune too far.* On Saturday our artillery moved over and at the next dawn all my men, horse and foot, crossed the Ganges.

About the beat of the morning drum our advanced patrols brought in word that the enemy had gone off and fled in the night. I had crossed over at early morning prayers, and had sent the camel train to ford the river lower down.

I commanded Chin Timur Sultan with a strong body of horse to gallop on after the Afghans. They pressed after the enemy without respite and without rest, until the Afghans had scattered, and much of their baggage and families and a few prisoners fell into our hands. So the Afghan rebellion was brought to an end.

A week later I reached Lucknow and surveyed it. Here I halted to settle the affairs of Oudh and the district and discovered on the banks of the river a well-known country called the Hunting Ground. When I had bathed in the river, either from the effect of the air or because some water got into my head I became deaf in the right ear. After this I mounted and set forth on a hunting party.

The pain in my ear came and went and I took opium to ward off the cold rays of the full moon. Oppressive sickness followed the opium next morning, but in spite of it I went all over the palaces of the Rajas Mansing and Bikramajit. I had already

*The Tiger of ten years ago would not have waited a day to cross. Constant fever, and the pain of old wounds, and the effect of the Indian climate were beginning to tell on Babar. He longed to return to Kabul to rest, but saw clearly that his new empire must be ruled from Agra and not Kabul. Six months later he fought his last battle against the king of Bengal, and won it. After this the Moghuls held all central and northern India, and ruled it until India passed into the hand of the British Raj.

visited the Rajput stronghold of Gwalior, but in the moonlight these two palaces were singularly beautiful. Lofty and splendid, and built of hewn stone, overlaid with white stucco—their domes covered with plates of gilded copper, the walls inlaid with painted tiles in the shapes of trees—they rise the height of twenty spears from the gardens. I took some peach flowers from the gardens and planted them in the palace grounds of Agra.

At this time, Rana Sanga having died in the forests to which he retreated after Kanwaha, messengers arrived from Raja Bikramajit, his second son, who was then in the nearly impregnable stronghold of Rantambor. He offered to render allegiance, and expressed the hope that an annuity of seventy *lakhs* would be granted him.

The bargain was concluded, and it was settled that he should give up Rantambor for another city, less strong. No sooner had he ranked himself among my subjects than he sent me the splendid crown-cap and golden girdle of Sultan Mahmoud, which had been in the hands of Rana Sanga.

If the young prince stood by his terms, I agreed that by the blessing of God I would make him Rana in his father's place and settle him in Chitore, the chief city of the Rajputs.

At this very time a runner came from the hills with news that Humayun had got a son, by the daughter of Yadgar Taghai.

I wrote to Kabul, to Humayun and Kwajah Kilan that I had triumphed over the rebels in the east and west of Hindustan, as well as over the last of the pagans, and that in the next spring I would make an effort to return in person to Kabul:

To Humayun, whom I remember with longing to see him again—health. Thanks be to God, who has given you a child— *He* has also given to me comfort and an object to love.

You who are seated on a throne ought to know that this is the season for you to expose yourself to danger and hardship and to exert your prowess in arms. Fail not to exert yourself, for indolence and ease suit but ill with royalty.

Remember to act generously by your brothers. I have some quarrels to settle with you. In many of your letters you complain of separation from your friends in Hind. It is wrong for you to give way to such a complaint. There is a saying—"If you are fettered by circumstances, submit; if you govern circumstances, act boldly.

There is no greater bondage than a king's, and it ill becomes him to complain of separation.

To comply with my wishes you have indeed sent me letters, but you have certainly never read them over; if you had attempted to read them you would have found it impossible. I managed to decipher your last letter, with much difficulty. It is confused and crabbed, and you have used far-fetched words. You fail in writing because you try to display your knowledge. In future write unaffectedly, using plain words which cause less trouble to writer and reader.

You are now about to set out on an expedition of importance to recover Balkh from the Uzbeks. Call your most experienced noblemen into council and guide yourself by their advice.

If you value my approval, do not waste your time in private parties. Watch the discipline of your army and keep the hearts of your officers by courtesy of manner.

I once more repeat my earnest wishes for your health. Written on Thursday the thirteenth of the first Rabi.

For the first time since I entered Hind there was no need to take the field against the enemy. The condition of the Purab was still unsettled, and I sent word to the army in the east that if there was need of moving against the Bengalis I would, God willing, mount and join them without delay.

I had ordered the road from Agra to Kabul to be measured, and *minars* (towers) to be erected along the way, with post-stations for six horses every few miles.

And, in order fittingly to receive the ambassadors who had come to wait on me, and to reward my own followers, I gave a great feast in the garden at Agra. It was then the beginning of winter.

I sat in an open pavilion that had just been built and covered with damp *khas* grass for coolness. On my right and left sat the sultans and *ameers*, the noblemen and officers. The Red Hat* ambassadors were seated under an awning, fifty paces distant with my veteran commander Yunis Ali to attend upon them. On the other side the Uzbek and Hindu ambassadors were likewise stationed. Before the dinner was served all the khans, sultans, grandees and officers came to present their congratulatory gifts of red and white and black money and other articles.

Woolen cloths were spread before me, into which the gold and silver were thrown,

**Kizilbashas*, the Persians. In these imperial feasts Babar's adherents offered him large amounts of money, etc., as tribute, and received back in turn liberal gifts of horses, garments of honor, weapons, etc. Their estates were held as gifts from the crown—everything belonged to the emperor. The spoils of battle, elephants and weapons were offered to him, and he gave them back, or other presents as he might be inclined. This system of gifts and counter-gifts dates back to the early Mongol and Turki monarchs. It is very well illustrated by the great diamond that came into Humayun's hand at Agra. He presented it to his father as a tribute-offering, and Babar returned it to his son as a gift. Later Moghuls were not as generous as the Tiger.

as well as purses—heaped up, one upon another.

Before dining, while the presents were coming in, there were fights of furious camels and elephants in a cleared space within the garden. Then came ram fights and wrestling matches.

As the dinner was placed I began to give my presents of robes of honor and balls of pure gold and silver. A rich reward was given, deservedly, to the officer who had built the bridge over the Ganges.

And to the veterans who had come from Andijan, my homeland—who, without a country and without a home, had roamed with me in my wanderings through the hills—to all these veterans and tried men, I gave vests and rich dresses of honor, with gold and silver clothes.

While we were eating dinner the Hindustani jugglers were brought in, and exhibited their feats. One of their tricks is the following: They place one hand on the ground, then raise up their other hand and two feet, all the while spinning around three rings in hand and feet. And, clinging to a single wooden pole, they walk about on it, without fastenings to their feet.

One of the most remarkable feats is when a tumbler supports a long pole at his waist and another mounts the pole to perform his tricks. In another case, a young tumbler stands on the head of an older one while both exhibit their tricks. Many *pateras*, or dancing girls, were also brought in, and danced.

Toward evening a great quantity of gold, silver and copper money was scattered. There was a precious hubbub and uproar. As night drew on I made the most distinguished guests sit down by me and talked with them until the end of the first watch.

IT SEEMED as if Hindustan were at last reduced to quiet, and, God willing, I meant to set out for the hills without losing a moment's time. Just then came tidings that Sultan Mahmud and other chieftains had gathered together an army of a hundred thousand men to oppose me in the country beyond the Ganges.

I was suffering from fevers and a Roumi administered to me a new remedy—boiling pepper dust and standing in the steam that rose from the earthen pot. Being then in the jungle country where wild elephants were found, near Chunar, we were just setting out to hunt when a galloper brought tidings that Sultan Mahmud was not far away. I was obliged to leave the hunting and advance at once by long marches.

While riding along the bank of the river, I came, without knowing it, upon a steep precipice that had been hollowed out by the action of the current below. No sooner had I reached the edge than it gave way and began to tumble into the river. Instantly I threw myself, by a leap from the stirrups, toward the inner part that held firm. My horse fell in, and had I remained in the saddle I must have gone down with it.

That same day I swam across the Ganges for amusement. I counted my strokes and found out that I reached the other bank at thirty-three. I then took breath and swam back. Before this I had crossed, by swimming, every river I met with, except the Ganges.

By the favor of God, in one month's time we scattered the Bengalis. And before we could return, one night when the second watch was past, the clouds of the rainy season broke, and there was such a tempest and the wind rose so high that most of the tents were blown down.

I was writing in the middle of my pavilion, and so suddenly did the storm come on that I had not time to gather up my papers before the pavilion came down on my head. The top of the structure was blown to shreds and the books and sheets of paper were drenched, but were gathered together and placed between dry woolen cloths.

The storm abated in an hour and we contrived to get up a spare tent, lighted a candle and with great difficulty kindled a fire, but did not sleep until morning, being occupied in trying to dry the sheets and papers.

As we had accomplished all I intended on the Bengali border; as the rains had set in and as we had been for five or six months in the field so that men and beasts were worn out, I marched toward Oudh, sending notice to the outlying sultans and *ameers* that I should await them in Agra.

On the last night of the ride to Agra we made twenty miles and halted at a tomb before dawn; mounting early we advanced twenty-four miles by noon and at midnight reached the garden of Hasht Behist at Agra.

Next morning I went into the castle and a native of Balkh brought me a few melons he had kept for me. They were excellent.

That Sunday at midnight I met Maham Begum, the mother of Humayun, who had come from Kabul to join me. I was sitting in talk with her, asking about Humayun, when in came my son himself.

His presence opened our hearts like rosebuds and made our eyes shine. It was my custom to keep open table every day; so great was my joy that I gave feasts in his honor and showed him every mark of distinction.

He had hurried from Kabul without permission and without notifying me, yet such was the charm of his presence that we lived together for some time in the closest intimacy—until Humayun took his leave of me and proceeded to Sambhal, his residence.

EITHER the climate or the water of the place did not agree with my son, for fever attacked him. I gave orders to have him conveyed by boat to Delhi, and thence to Agra, so that a physician might attend him.

In spite of all remedies, he got no better. Instead, he became delirious.

At his bedside, Maham Begum said to me:

"What cause is there for you to sorrow so? You are a ruler, and have other children, while I have none save Humayun."

"Others have I, yet none so dear to me as Humayun," I answered.

Then Mir Abdul Kasim, who was a person of great knowledge, explained to me that only one remedy could be applied in the case of such maladies. It was to make a sacrifice to God of something of great value in order to obtain from Him the restoration of the sufferer's health.

Thereupon, having reflected that nothing in the world was dearer to me than Humayun except my own life, I determined to offer myself in the hope that God would accept my sacrifice.

Kwajah Khalifa and other close friends came to me and said:

"Humayun will recover his health! How can you speak so unwisely? It will suffice if you offer the most precious thing you possess of worldly goods. Offer as alms the great diamond that came to you after Ibrahim's defeat and which you gave to Humayun."

"But," I replied, "there is no treasure which can be compared to my son. I shall offer myself as his ransom. He is sorely stricken and his weakness has need of my strength."

Immediately I entered the room where Humayun was lying, and walked thrice around him, starting from his head and saying—"I take upon myself all that you suffer."

At the same instant I felt myself borne down and depressed, while he became quieter and stronger. It was not long until he arose in restored health, while I sank down in weakness. Feeling this coming upon me, I called the chief men of the empire, the grandees and the greatest nobles, and placing their hands in Humayun's as a mark of investiture, I solemnly proclaimed him as my successor*—

*These were the last words the Tiger wrote, and were found in a fragment of his papers long afterward. In about a week he died, in what should have been the prime of his life, the age of forty-eight. He had spent thirty-six of these years in the field of war—in camp or saddle, and, weakened by old wounds and fever, he met his death without misgiving, a gallant gentleman. There have been other Moghuls of India, but not in all Asia a second Babar.

RAILROAD RAIDERS

by R. W. Knight

PROBABLY one of the most novel and ambitious raids ever planned was the famous railroad raid attempted by a detachment of Union soldiers during the Civil War. The raid was planned by a spy in the employ of General Buell, and undertaken with the express purpose of penetrating Confederate territory, capture an engine and make for Chattanooga, overpowering all trains met en route and burning all bridges, and thus isolate that city, at that time practically ungarrisoned. To realize fully the courageous confidence of the raiders one must know that the raid was to start from Marietta, Georgia, two hundred miles from Chattanooga, and all Confederate territory—the raiding party consisting of twenty men!

On Saturday morning April 12, 1862, a train of the Western and Atlantic R. R., in charge of Captain W. A. Fuller, carrying both freight and passengers, stopped at

Marietta to permit a party of strangers to embark. The strangers, typical Southerners in dress and manner, paid their fares to various points, claiming to be refugees from within the Union lines and intent upon joining the Confederates.

Seven miles farther on, at Big Shanty, a training camp for three thousand Confederate recruits, the train stopped during meal hour, most of the passengers and crew going to an eating-house built some distance from the track. While enjoying their meal, the train crew was surprized to see their engine and three freight cars detached from the passenger coaches, slowly move away. Hastily leaving their meal, they ran to the track in time to see the engine pass from sight, commandeered by several strangers.

Captain Fuller, thinking Confederate deserters had stolen the train, set out by foot for the next station, determined to capture and punish the rogues. Passing a group of bewildered trackmen, the captain learned that the strange engine crew had stopped and seized their tools, cut the wires and carried several lengths of it away to make immediate repairing impossible. This surprizing action led Captain Fuller to believe that the train crew was a detachment of Union men in disguise. Convinced of his suspicions, and with a new stimulus added to his resolve, he pressed on, using a small hand-car for the purpose of pursuit. With his engine men, he pushed on, one man riding the car and resting while the other two ran beside it and pushed, their car being without power of hand traction.

From time to time they were compelled to remove obstructions of crosstrees that blocked their passage. At one point they were ditched by the removal of two outside rails at a dangerous curve. None the less, the captain, now joined by two citizens, pushed on to Etawah where they found an idle engine. With the aid of some Confederate troops they hooked up a coal car and, all boarding it, they again took up the pursuit.

From Etawah to Kingston the pursuers ran at a speed of sixty miles an hour without sighting the raiders. At Kingston Captain Fuller found the raiders had stopped and their commander, James Andrew, claiming to be a Confederate officer, with a trainload of ammunition for General Beauregard at Corinth, demanded that the agent instruct all trains to pull aside and give him a clear track. So authoritative and so plausible was the Union commander that the agent had done as directed, aiding the raiders by the most dangerous part of their trip! The freight trains sidetracked at Kingston by order of the Union raider made it impossible for his Confederate pursuer to pass with his present engine. Captain Fuller, again placed at a disadvantage, abandoned his engine and, intercepting an express freight with the aid of a gun, he commandeered the train, uncoupled the freight cars, and set after the fugitives.

Two miles beyond Calhoun the raiders were sighted for the first time. They uncoupled one of the freight cars, hoping to delay their pursuer, but the intrepid Southerner ran to it, coupled it to the engine and, climbing to its roof, directed his engineer from there. Two miles farther on he again ran into an abandoned car. He hitched that on, too, was enabled to drop both at a sidetrack at Resaca. A few miles north of Resaca, the speeding engine making fifty-five miles an hour, ran directly over a rail placed diagonally across the track!

Two miles beyond Dalton, in full view of his Confederate regiment, Colonel Glenn encountered the daring raiders tearing up the tracks. At frequent intervals they cut all the lines of telegraphic communication inflicting a great deal of damage.

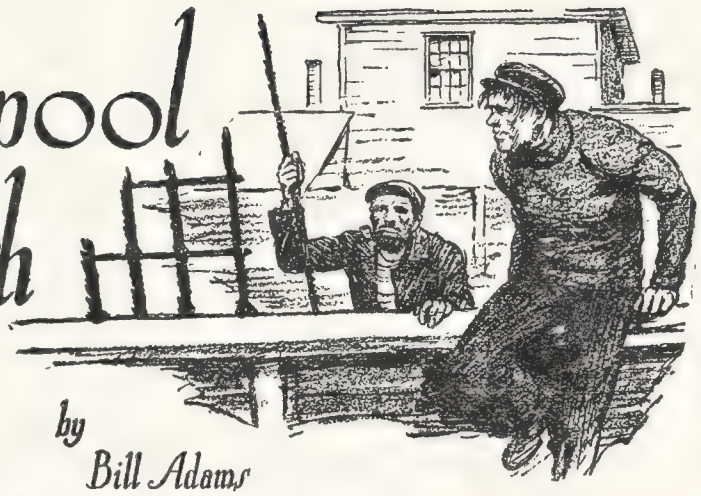
Unfortunately for the Union army, the locomotive ran out of fuel and made it necessary for the raiders to abandon it and take to the woods. Andrews, their courageous leader, remarked—

"Every one take care of himself."

Due to the force and determination of Captain Fuller their plan was first defeated, and by his insistence all were captured by local militia.

To the memory of the daring raiders a monument was erected and it stands today at the National Cemetery at Chattanooga—a monument to the dauntless raiders—and to a glorious defeat.

Liverpool Irish



by Bill Adams

Author of "The Apprentice Way," "Slaver," etc.

IT WAS late in the nineties. I was making my fourth and last voyage as an apprentice in sail. There were three of us, Corson, Haugh and I, who would be leaving the ship and going up for our second mate's tickets when she came back to the Mersey. Corson and I were big and husky. Haugh, though not quite so big, was as husky as either of us. The other five apprentices had all been nearly three years at sea.

We had gone out to Oregon from Rotterdam. It was while we were bending sail in Rotterdam—we were on the crojick yard at the time—that we overheard the skipper of a bark called the *Cumbrian* say to our skipper—

"I wish I had your apprentices."

Our Old Man, who was leaning on the taffrail, looking down to the poop of the *Cumbrian*, replied:

"I guess you do. You ain't the only one."

So you can see for yourself that we took a sort of pride in the old hooker. She was a good ship. Clyde-built, fast and handy. The skipper had had her for a good many years, and he kept her like a picture. In port, to any one not a sailor, she looked much like the rest of them; dirty with discharging and loading cargo. But at sea she shone. We were forever painting and varnishing, polishing brass-work, and scrubbing. The skipper thought the world of her. He was around sixty-five years old, short and slight, gray-headed, with a sharp little gray beard. There was still a hard gleam in his eyes, but he was a peaceful old sailor now, though in dirty weather his lean face looked like a flint with two hard crystals in it. Crews seldom made any trouble in the nineties. Genuine sailors, the kind of men that sailed the packet ships, glorying in wild weather and liking it best of all when things were come to a matter of touch and go, were getting very scarce already.

Our mate was an oldish man too; though not so old that he couldn't go aloft and lend a hand with the lower topsails when it came to a case of stripping her down. His name was Sutherland. He'd a mustache that made him look like a friendly old walrus, and a pair of pale blue, amicable windy eyes. We apprentices all liked him. He was one of those fellows who never seem to hurry or to get excited, a cool take-it-as-it-comes sailor; and he always spoke to us as though he'd not forgotten how it felt to be a youngster. He let us have a free hand, set us our work and left us to do it, and if we wanted anything explained he was not above helping us out. The sort of old-timer for whom any decent apprentice would pull his arms out.

The second mate was different. A rather cadaverous, tall and sinewy man without a particle of friendship in his face or manner. Big bones. Long nose. Narrow nostrils. Dark eyes. Scrawny wrists. Short, stiff black hair. And an everlasting scowl. By the mere aspect of the man you could tell that he hated ships. You'll find such misfits at sea now and then. He never joined

"Liverpool Irish," copyright 1926 by B. M. Adams.

in on a chantey chorus, never came into our half-deck to light his pipe and pass a word or two as Mr. Sutherland sometimes did, and never went aloft unless it was a case of actual necessity. He either ignored us as far as he was able to do so, or behaved as though he pitied us. No one can pity a sea apprentice. Half starved he may be, and cold, and forever cursing himself for a fool to have gone to sea; but pity does not go. Some say pity is akin to love. It's akin to contempt too. That's how it was with the second mate. A second mate can make an apprentice's life rather much like hell.

On the passage out from Rotterdam we had had the sort of crew common enough in the 'nineties. There were Germans, a Russian Finn or two, several Chileanos, a Greek, a Portuguese—not a solitary white man in the lot—we used to call none but American and Britishers white men in those days; though Swedes and Norwegians, and for that matter plenty of others, stacked up just as well. But the outward bound crew had been a mangy lot, a dispirited crowd without a particle of fight in them. We had rounded the Horn under royals for that once, and had made a fine weather passage. Nothing to try a crew out. The second mate had tried them out and proved them up. Speaking to them as if they had all been dogs, sometimes kicking them about, he had never had an atom of trouble with, or come-back from, any one of them. They were the sort of chicken-livered scum who would swallow anything. As soon as we dropped the hook in the river at Portland they all deserted the ship; taken ashore by Larry Sullivan, the sailor's boarding master, with their skins full of rot-gut whisky.

Our new crew came aboard when she was once more at anchor in the stream, with a full cargo of wheat in her hold. Sullivan and his runner brought them off just before nightfall. They were all drunk, of course. No crew came aboard sober in those days. Most of them were unable to stand, and had to be hauled up from the boat with a rope under their arms, and dragged along the deck to the fo'c's'le.

The Old Man was ashore. The mate sat smoking his pipe on the cabin skylight. The second was not in sight. I was standing in the doorway of the apprentices' quarters, watching Sullivan and his runner with the men. Behind me some of the apprentices were writing a first letter home. Some lay reading in their bunks.

"They look like an all-white crew," I said, in reply to a question, "and they're grouchy as Old Nick."

The more sober of the hands were indiscriminately cursing Sullivan and one another.

Sullivan and his runner hauled a remonstrating sailor through the fo'c's'le door, and for a moment the deck was empty. I supposed that that was the last of them. But, just as I was about to turn away, a monster of a man climbed up and over the bulwark. He was a broad-shouldered, vast-chested sailor with a great mop of tawny hair. Unless you were well used to the way in which some men take drink, you would not have known that he was drunk. Looking about him for all the world as if he owned the ship, he jumped to the deck. After studying her for a moment he turned, bent over the bulwarks, and helped up a little black-haired, loud-swearing, stumpy fellow in whose bearded lips was fiercely gripped a short corn-cob pipe. Leaning over the bulwark, side by side, they looked down to the boat.

Then for the first time I saw Tod Costigan. He was short, square and bow-shouldered. His face was covered with large freckles, and little rusty pockmarks. The backs of his hands and wrists were covered with blue tattooing. His hair was thin and reddish, and he wore a bristly red mustache. To judge by his expression you would have supposed that the whole world was about to jump him, and that he was both ready and willing for it to do so. His small red-rimmed eyes were at the same time defiant and humorous. He swung himself over the bulwark, shoved the other two out of his way, and sprang nimbly to the deck. Looking fore and aft along the ship, and aloft at her masts and yards, he cursed her from boom end to wheel box, from truck to keelson. Suddenly, ceasing his cursing, he thrust his arms through those of the other two, and away they all went to the fo'c's'le. Sullivan, coming from the fo'c's'le met them.

"A fine voyage to you, Reuben," said he to the big tawny man and to the little fellow with the corn-cob pipe between his lips, "A spankin' fat pay-day to you, Jimmie Roach." But before he could say a word

to Tod Costigan, Tod struck a hard fist beneath his jaw.

"Git to —— out uv it, the two o' ye!" he growled.

Sullivan laughed. The daylight was almost gone. He and his runner went to their boat and ashore. Knowing that we had a hard day ahead on the morrow, we apprentices turned in for a good night. The other apprentices went asleep right away; but I lay awake a long time, listening to the racket in the fo'c's'le. The new hands were laughing, singing, and swearing. Now and again there was the threat of a fight. It was big Reuben who invariably stopped them from coming to blows. His deep voice boomed with the warning bellow of a fog-horn—

"Quit ut, b'ys! Quit ut, or I'll tread on the lot o' ye!"

When the night watchman called us before daylight he said:

"Them fellers has been at it all night. They're wild weather sailors. Every last one of 'em's Liverpool Irish."

We sat drinking our coffee till the turn-to bell at five o'clock. We three older apprentices were glad of a good crew, for unless she made a fast passage our apprenticeships would be out before she came to port. That was our main concern. The younger boys were hoping for trouble between the new hands and the second mate. None of us had any idea of what we were in for.

The bell struck and we went to the deck, to give her her regular morning scrub down. The fo'c's'le lamp was lit, and, passing by, we could see the men all lying in their bunks. They should have been out, as we were, when the bell went. We were keen to see what would happen when the second ordered them out. We wondered if he would drive them, as he had always driven the old crew.

The second mate left them entirely alone, and we scrubbed her down without them. Close to eight bells, when the scrubbing was finished and we were swabbing her paint work, Tod Costigan strolled from the fo'c's'le. The mate was still in his room. The second was standing by the main fife-rail.

A derisive grin on his pimply face, his small red-rimmed eyes full of challenge, Tod walked up to the second, and, his head cocked a little to one side, calmly sized the mate up from head to foot.

"Ye're a louse!" said Tod. "Ye're the son of a louse. Yer gran'fathers was all of 'em louses. Y'aint nothin' but louse. To —— wid ye!"

He stood with his fists clenched, ready and waiting, while, his always colorless face now even paler than usual, the second stared down at him The second's fists were not clenched. He was silent.

"Wot did I tell ye?" sneered Tod, and, turning away, went unconcernedly back to the fo'c's'le.

As the second swung round upon us, and bellowed to us to get on with our swabbing, we apprentices heard a burst of laughter from the crew.

Eight bells struck, and we went below for breakfast. We were wondering what Mr. Sutherland would do did Tod or any of the hands get fresh with him. As we returned to the deck after breakfast we passed by and went to the fo'c's'le door.

"Tumble out now, boys!" he ordered. "Get them sails out of the locker. Let's see if there's any sailors amongst you!"

A hoot of laughter answered him, and, with Tod in the lead, out came all the men.

"We'll shew ye sailors as is sailors, sorr," cried Tod, and saying— "Come on, sons, let's do a bit o' sailorin' for t'owld gintleman," led the way to the sail-locker.

WHILE the younger apprentices went aft with the second, to swing the quarter-boats in and lash them on their skids, Corson, Haugh and I went to the locker with the men. For all the notice they took of the mate there might have been no mate. Merely by the way that they went about getting her canvas out it was easy to see that they were real sailors, and after watching them for a minute or two, the mate left them to themselves and went aft.

"She's got a first-rate lot of hands," he told the second. "They're bending sail as if they owned her. If she gets the wind she'll make a good passage."

The second made no reply, but scowled toward the men, now busy on the fore deck. Ordering the other apprentices to get forward and lend a hand with the sails, he went up to the poop with the mate. The Old Man was not aboard. While the two mates stayed aft, we boys worked with the men all morning. Once, when Mr. Sutherland came forward to see how they were

getting along, Reuben pulled a bottle from a pocket and offered him a drink. The mate said, "This is no place to be drinking," and they all roared with laughter.

He grinned, and left them to themselves again. Us they treated as if we were all first voyagers. When Corson grew huffy at being elbowed aside, Jimmie Roach stepped up to him.

"Git to —— out uv a sailor's way, or I'll poke ye one," he snarled.

Reuben grabbed Roach by the neck, and jerked him back, so that he fell sprawling on an outspread sail.

"Quit ut, or I'll step on ye. Leave them b'ys alone," said he.

"A —— uv a time ye'd have steppin' on me, an' well ye know ut," growled Roach, leaping to his feet.

Every one laughed. But he and the rest of them quit bothering us, and with Tod, Roach and Reuben taking charge of things, we worked like derricks till dinner time.

After dinner the stern-wheeler made fast alongside, to shove us down-stream toward the sea. The drink was all gone, and, beginning to sober, the hands were quarrelsome. But for Tod, Roach and Reuben, there'd have been half a dozen fights started. No one dared to stand up to those three. By the time she dropped anchor at nightfall all her canvas was aloft; so neatly stowed that there was not a crease to be seen, or a loose gasket anywhere—a regular harbor stow. Mr. Sutherland told the second to get the decks cleared up.

"Those fellers are sailors, Mister," said he. "We'll sweep her down, and call it a day."

At the second's order to clear the decks up, Tod Costigan sang out:

"Clear 'em up yerself an' be —— to ye! We ain't no blitherin' owld wimmen."

The hands strolled off to the fo'c's'le. It was evident that for as long as there was still any of Sullivan's liquor in them they considered themselves above putting a finger to any common deck work. Mr. Sutherland's blue eyes twinkled—

"That's old style Liverpool Irish," he said.

But the second came growling at and finding fault with us as we coiled the ropes and swept her down.

The men were quiet that night. There wasn't a sound from the fo'c's'le. When Mr. Sutherland ordered all hands to man the windlass next morning, Tod walked up to him.

"Ain't ye got a bottle, sorr? he asked. "Me head is sore."

Every one laughed. Mr. Sutherland, his quiet eyes full on Tod's face, said:

"Get to your windlass bar, Costigan. Let's see if there's a good chantey-man amongst you fellows."

Tod swung round to his comrades.

"T'owld gintleman wants a chantey, b'ys. Come on now," he cried, and all looking rather sore-headed, they went to the windlass.

We ran the anchor up in record time to the swing of Tod's chantey.

"There's fire in the fore hold,
There's fire down below,
Fire in the main well,
The captain didn't know."

The chorus rolled over the sand-bars, over the low green foreshores, and far away above the dark tops of the Oregon pines; the morning still as a mirror, the cold river without a ripple on its peaceful windings.

"Fire! Fire! Fire down below,
It's fetch a bucket o' water, girls, there's fire down below!"

When the hook was up we went below for breakfast. After breakfast, when the second sang out for all hands to scrub her down not a man came from the fo'c's'le. He repeated his order close to their door. Tod looked out.

"Don't ye know a sailor w'en ye see one, ye louse?" he said. "Dis gang is all sailors. Did ye s'pose we wuz a lot o' blitherin' ol' wimmen?"

The mate came forward.

"Get out of that now, men," he ordered. "Get her washed down."

"Ah, wash the hooker yerself if it's washed ye want her, sorr," answered Tod.

The Old Man appeared on the poop, and blew his whistle for the mate to go aft.

"What's the matter forward there, Mister? Where are the men? he asked.

"The drink's not quite out of them yet, sir," replied Mr. Sutherland.

"All right," said the skipper. "Let them be for a while then."

When we anchored off Astoria in the forenoon the skipper went ashore with the tug. As he boarded her he called to the mate to be all ready to heave in and go to sea at three o'clock. While we boys were working

about the deck, Tod looked out of the fo'c's'le.

"Wot sort o' crew did ye have last passage, kid?" he asked me, and when I answered, "Dutchmen," ejaculated, "We'll shew 'em who's Dutchmen!"

As he turned back to the fo'c's'le he said something at which all hands laughed uproariously. I heard big Reuben's voice boom out:

"Liverpool Irish way, sons—not a —— lick o' work but sailor work," and at that they all started singing one of the old packet-ship songs; a rowdy chorus of the days when the packets flew from New York to the Mersey and back, their crews paid by the run instead of by the month. Men who wouldn't lift a finger to do anything but handling canvas, so that other men had to be carried to do the common deck work if the skipper wanted it done. They grew noiser and noiser. While I was in the main rigging, Haugh passed their door. Speaking low, so that the second who stood near-by couldn't hear him, he told me that the hands were tossing up to see whether they would heave up anchor or not. As he spoke there came a burst of cheering from the fo'c's'le.

At three the skipper came back, with the tug that was to take her over the bar. Not a hand came out at the mate's order to man the windlass. The skipper went to their door, only to come away with an angry frown on his face. He went ashore again, and in half an hour was back with the sheriff, with whom he once more went to the fo'c's'le. The sheriff's warning that they would be taken ashore and put in jail unless they turned to was greeted with hooting and laughter.

The upshot of a consultation held by skipper, mate and sheriff was that the hands would be all right once she was outside. There were in any case no other sailors to be had in the port just then, and the ship could not be kept waiting indefinitely. So the sheriff went ashore, and we lay at anchor till morning. Then the tug came off to us, and with her a launch bringing a gang of long-shoremen to help us heave in. They left us as soon as the hook was up. The morning was bright, with a light fair wind. As soon as she was clear of the bar we apprentices ran the topmast staysails up. Then Mr. Sutherland ordered the men out, to get the topsails on her. Tod Costigan looked out and round the blue sparkling sea.

"Dis ain't no sailor weather, sorr," he said. "There's enough o' ye widdout botherin' us b'ys."

The mate reported to the skipper. They spoke together awhile. Then while the Old Man paced his poop with a savage gleam in his eyes, the cook, steward and carpenter were called out to help sheet home the lower topsails. The tug dropped us. Without a pull from any of the hands we put full sail upon her; the second's face black as thunder while he lay back on the ropes with the rest of us. It was a long-drag day for her apprentices. But when Mr. Sutherland looked into our half-deck at supper time and said:

"You boys have done well. The hands'll be all right in the morning," we felt a bit proud of ourselves; though used to hard work as we were, we were pretty well fagged out.

Morning came, and things were just the same. The men only jeered when the skipper went to the fo'c's'le. The wind though fair, was shifty, so that we were constantly at the braces, hauling her heavy yards about. The second growled at us continually. For three similar days our contempt for him helped to keep us going. We had to take what sleep we could at night. With one at her wheel and another on lookout it wasn't much. Haugh wanted to jump the second; but Corson and I, though we felt just as he did, kept him quiet. We didn't want to make any extra trouble for the Old Man and mate. With the ship already some four hundred miles out it was of course too late to think of putting back to the Columbia now. Night and morning the skipper went to the fo'c's'le, and each time he came away we heard the men laughing.

"Those fellows are spoiling for a fight, Mister," he told the mate. "We'll go easy with them for a day or two yet. Then, if they won't turn to I'll take her to Frisco."

In the first watch that night the wind freshened. We apprentices took the royals and light fore-and-afters off her. We were coming down from aloft when a squall caught her, and down she went till her lee rail hissed in the sea. The mate ran forward, shouting:

"Out here, you men! All hands on deck! Step along, now!"

A bellow of voices answered him, and out came all the hands on the run. Shouting

and laughing, with the sprays flying over them, they made for the bunt-lines and clew-lines. Not one of them would take an order from the second. But to Mr. Sutherland it was "Aye, aye, sorr!" You would have supposed that they had never done anything but obey him. The ship rose up and flew, with a hard nor'wester at her heels.

"THOSE fellows only wanted a taste of bad weather," said the skipper.

"They'll be all right now." She was romping along under topsails and courses, and it was easy to see that the Old Man was well pleased with the good slant of wind she was getting. It was a bright moonlight night, with every rat-line and shadow distinct. Not a cloud in the sky, and the sea running up in long white lathers of foam. I could see all along her deck as I stood at the wheel. It was just past midnight. The men were coming down from aloft.

"Keep her as she is, Mister," said the skipper to the second. "Call me if it freshens. If the wind drops, give her more sail at once."

The skipper and mate went below.

As the men leapt from the shrouds to the deck one after the other of them went straight to the fo'c's'le. Not a man stayed on deck. None of them lifted a finger to coil up any of the ropes. The second prowled the poop, black as thunder while the apprentices coiled the gear. Toward the end of the watch the wind fell, and he went to the fo'c's'le.

"Get out here, an' set them 'gallants! he shouted. A snarl answered him. Tod sprang out to the moonlight, big Reuben and Jimmie Roach looking after him. He made straight for the second, who turned and ran. All the men came to the deck and cheered. By the main fife-rail Tod turned back, and they all went below again. We boys pulled our arms out setting the t'gallantsails without them.

When the skipper came up next morning, and found that the men were still refusing duty he went down to the quarter-deck, with a pistol in his hand, and called to the mate to order the crew aft. We heard Tod ask,

"What does t'owld blaygiard want now?"

They strolled unconcernedly aft, and Tod stepped up to the skipper.

"What's the matter, sorr?" he asked, and added, "Dis ain't no sailor weather. Didn't ye niver see the Liverpool Irish before?"

The skipper turned to the second mate—

"Put that man in irons," he ordered. The men immediately stepped toward Tod, but he waved them back,

"Let's see wot t'owld b'y'll do," said he.

His face chalky white, the second approached Tod, who held his wrists out.

"Put 'em on if ye dare, ye louse!" said he.

There wasn't a sound as, with a wide grin on his lips Tod looked straight into the face of the second. As, with the skipper beside him, the second clapped the irons on, a low and threatening growl rose from the men, Tod laughed.

"Git back! Git back! What th' divil's the matter wid ye?" he called.

"Lock him up," ordered the skipper, and the second started to drag Tod toward the room at the foot of the poop ladder. The men roared with laughter as Tod wriggled and squirmed. Now that he was helpless the second struck at him, and at that all the men strode forward. But, laughing to them to get back, Tod deliberately fell to the deck. They shouted with laughter as the second hauled him away by his coat collar. The skipper raised his pistol, and they fell silent.

"Costigan will stay in irons till you men turn to and do your duty," said the skipper.

The ship was well south of the Golden Gate now, and making fourteen an hour on her course. The skipper had decided to settle the thing at sea.

"Is ut all right wid' ye, Tod?" called Jimmie Roach, taking his little corn cob pipe from his lips.

"Tell t'owld blaygiard to go to —— wid his hooker, b'ys," answered Tod, his freckled grinning face appearing at the open port of the locker room as the second clanged the door upon him.

Once more everything was up to us apprentices.

The weather held fine, with a good northeast trade. She ran south under full sail; each day a little warmer than the last. With the second mate in charge of the deck, we were kept at work all day. By night the mate took her, and we snatched what sleep we could. In a couple of days the skipper once again went forward. He warned the hands that they would all go to jail when the ship came to port, and that every day

that they refused duty was making it so much the worse for them.

Big Reuben said—

"She ain't there yit, sorr."

Day after day went by. She was close to the line, where, usually, a ship runs into a few days of calm, torrid weather.

"That fellow'll roast in there," said the skipper. "He'll be mighty glad to get out and turn to. When he does, they all will."

But she ran straight from the northeast into a fine southeast trade, and Tod stayed where he was. Morning and night they took him hardtack and water. If the hardtack had been old moldy Liverpool bread he would have been starved out. But, having run out of Liverpool bread just before she came to Oregon, she had been restocked with West Coast biscuit. West Coast biscuit was pie to a Liverpool Irish sailor. Day and night, Tod sang at all hours, his impudent voice ringing all along the deck. Sometimes the hands joined in on the chorus, and the ship was a madhouse. Worked to the limit though we were, we boys were getting a good deal of fun. While they loafed about the fore deck the hands passed frequent comments on our work.

"Them b'ys is all goin' to be bridge ornymints," said they. "Polish her up, b'ys. Light the binnacle, b'y!—thot's the —— uv a way to make a sailor!"

One of the men had a squeaky old fiddle. They sang and danced in the dog-watches. Jimmie Roach was working on a ship model. Often one or another of them called to the second:

"If I wuz ye I'd jump over the side, an' say, ' 'Ere goes nobody.' "

Had the second ever been mad enough to sail in and whip the speaker, or even try to do so, he might have settled the whole thing perhaps.

He was a bigger man than any but Reuben, and both younger and more agile than he. Sometimes one or other of us would notice Mr. Sutherland looking at the second with cold thoughtful eyes.

The farther south she sailed, the fresher the trade blew. Sprays began to fly. We had had to let her fancy-work go, and were kept busy aloft; trying to get her into good trim for the roaring forties and the Horn. The skipper began to look worried.

When twelve days south of the line, we headed her away on a southeasterly course. We were due for heavy weather now at any time.

On the fifteenth day the morning sky was overcast and threatening, and we furled the royals; for the first time since Tod Costigan had been locked up. In mid forenoon we took the t'gallantsails off her. The sky was growing darker and darker. Once more the skipper went forward. This time big Reuben came from the fo'c's'le to meet him.

"If ye'll turn Tod loose, we'll take in sail for ye, sorr," he said. "If ye won't t'owld hooker'll go to blazes."

The low black fringe of a great woolly cloud was fast approaching her mastheads. The wind piped shrilly in her gear. The fast rising sea flung showers of spray across her.

"I'll see you men well paid for this," said the skipper. There was a fierce light in his eyes. His knotty hands were clenched and twitching. For a moment it looked as if he would strike Reuben. A few heavy drops of rain fell. The day grew suddenly darker.

The skipper called the second and bade him turn Tod loose.

The second's face was white as he unlocked the handcuffs. But taking no notice of him, Tod went forward and rejoined his fellows as peacefully as if he were merely come from the wheel.

Mr. Sutherland's order rang out, and, shouting and yelling like boys let out of school, the hands rushed to the gear.

From that day on it blew almost continually. Day after day we furled, or set, or furled, the courses and t'gallants. She wallowed through an unceasingly stormy sea. Often her decks were waist-deep in green water. The men were in their element. It was sailor weather. Obeying orders from the mate alone, completely ignoring the second, they handled her canvas and spars, steered her and took lookout. But in brief periods between the howling squalls, when for a little while we were able to crowd sail on her and ordinary deck work was once more possible, they all returned to the fo'c's'le. At those times the skipper looked surly as a bear. For the first time since he had had her there were rust streaks on her houses and bulwarks. Her brass work was green. Her fancy-work was neglected. Mr. Sutherland alone remained imperturbable as ever.

We were about eight hundred miles west

of the Horn when the wind hauled to the sou'sou'west, and blew with hurricane force. To run before such a gale was impossible, and we were forced to bring her to the wind under main and mizen goose-winged topsails. Their crests white savage cataracts, the gray backs rolled mountain high. No sleep was possible. Combers broke at her rail, and swept shoulder deep across her in the waist. Burying her fo'c's'le head, she rose to toss tons of water to the main deck.

Only half sure of his crew, the Old Man, his eyes the eyes of an eagle, glowed into the tempest. Swinging through a horrible arc, the yards clacked on their parrels. Sail after sail, working loose from its gaskets, had to be restowed. It seemed that at any moment something must go.

On deck night and day, Mr. Sutherland looked more than ever like a walrus; while, mute amongst men who could now take no time to despise him, the second mate ascended and descended her thrumming rigging with the rest of us. For three days and three nights the gale blew, and, hour by hour, day by day, the men forestalled the mate's every order. Tod's defiant hoots were borne away and lost, unheard in the all-encircling fury. He, Roach and Reuben, led the way wherever danger threatened; the first men aloft, the last down. Sailor's weather.

ON THE fourth day the wind died, and by midday the sea was flat as glass. Sky and sea were inky. Not an air. Not a ripple. Biting cold. Horizons like penciled edges—black threads demarking gloom-laden expanses of water and of cloud. The ship completely motionless, weary seeming, disconsolate beyond words; white salt thickly crusted on her lofty royal-masts. Sheer silence.

After dinner, when we had sheeted home the three lower topsails, the skipper told Mr. Sutherland to call the hands to the quarter-deck.

"Good men, Mister," he said. "With a poor crew we might have lost her. I'll give them another chance."

Their faces salty and tired, slowly and without a word, the men walked aft, Tod, Roach, and Reuben in the lead. Reuben bareheaded, barefooted in the biting cold, indifferent. Roach with his corn-cob pipe tight in his bearded, disrespectful lips. Tod with his hands in the pockets of his dungaree pants, his ever-inquisitive eyes taking in all things, the ever-present desire for battle in his whole demeanor.

The skipper bent toward them from the poop.

"Men," he said, "from now on you'll obey all orders from the two mates. I'll let the past be."

Instantly the weariness was gone from every face. A bellow of laughter rolled over the silent sea. The sea salt thick upon his bristly, red mustache, Tod Costigan looked up to the skipper.

"Not a —— bit o' work but sailor work," said he.

"Very well," snapped the skipper. "Then I sail her to Falklands and see you all in jail."

There was a harsh note of disappointment in his tones.

As the skipper was speaking I saw the second mate's lips part, and a startled stare come to his eyes. I was turning to see at what he looked when Reuben noticed his face and also turned. Before the second mate or I could speak Reuben cried—

"Tod!"

Tod Costigan swung about, saw the main hatch whither Reuben pointed and stepped to the foot of the ladder above which the skipper stood.

"T'owld hooker's afaire, sorr," said Tod.

From beneath the after corner of the main hatch tarpaulins there floated a tiny wisp of smoke.

In utter silence the skipper descended, and passed through the men; who fell apart to follow at his heels. He laid a hand on the hatch. Mr. Sutherland and the men laid their hands upon it.

Tod Costigan's casual voice broke the stillness.

"She's burnin' fine," said he.

In the moment that the mate and skipper spoke together, the men, led by the indomitable three, were gone. Before any orders were given, they were being carried out. Some of the hands were at the ventilators, lashing their covers more securely, making them airtight as possible. Others ran for extra tarpaulins wherewith to batten the hatches tighter.

"There ain't nothin' to do but smother her down an' let her go," said Tod.

But, alone and afire, the ship was hopelessly becalmed. Help might perhaps be

just below a horizon. There might be no help within a thousand miles.

At the skipper's order the second mate led the apprentices to the steward's pantry. Two of us lifted the hatch in the pantry deck, whence a sloping ladder gave access to the storeroom below. A column of smoke rolled up.

"Get down an' fetch them stores up," ordered the second mate, and stepped aside to make way for us.

Corson started down the ladder, Haugh and I behind him. When half-way down, he staggered and fell, overcome by the smoke. Swaying on uncertain feet, I heard an oath at the ladder head above. Two strong hands clasped me. I came to my senses a moment later, prostrate on the pantry deck. Haugh lay choking at my side. Above us stood Roach, glaring into the face of the second mate. As I climbed to my feet big Reuben came up the ladder, with Corson over his great shoulder. He laid Corson down, and, followed by Roach, vanished once more into the uprolling smoke. In a very little time they were back, dragging Tod Costigan with them. They were gasping for air. Their eyes were running. But each of the three held a case of canned goods fast gripped beneath his arm. The skipper appeared.

"Shut her down, men. It's no use," he said, and, as Tod stumbled to his feet, looked curiously at the second mate.

Preceded by Mr. Sutherland, apprentices and men ran forward all together to go down to the sail locker and open the iron door that led from it into the fore 'tween-decks hold. Smoke belched forth as we slid the door back, and a blast of hot air. The mate ordered the apprentices up to the deck, and himself led the way into the burning hold.

Night fell, inky black. No star. No least lap of water at her sides. Now and again came the cry of a sea-bird, intensifying the dead silence, the impressing darkness. Her red and green side lights shone; steady, unwavering, watchful but useless eyes, that magnified our solitude.

The storeroom and holds were unapproachable. We had only three small cases of canned stores, and a few sacks of wheat.

Mr. Sutherland's voice rang out, confident, serene, giving an order that all knew could only be vain. The clanking of the deck pump broke the silence. Passing deck buckets from hand to hand, we flung sea water on her planks; hoping against all hope to keep them cool, to save the seams from opening.

At midnight we rested for coffee. The cook had made coarse cakes of ground wheat; for, lest we have to abandon her and take to the boats, the canned stores must be husbanded. We ate beside the galley door, men and boys together on the open deck, the apprentices quiet, the hands speaking of inconsequential things—of fun had with the dollars of past pay-days; of people who kept drinking places on waterfronts to which we might nevermore come—carelessly jesting, openly indifferent that the ship beneath their feet was burning.

The Old Man walked forward.

The clouds had parted a little above the eastern horizon, and a waning moon cast dismal light upon us, the light of a candle, expiring in a draftless vault.

We made way for the Old Man. As he passed through his crew one of the sailors spoke, his accents jaunty and clear.

"We'll git t'owld hooker to them Falklans for ye, sorr," said Costigan.

The Old Man paused and regarded his crew. Breaking from a fringe of cloud, the moon glowed on his furrowed features, into his solemn eyes.

"Eight hundred miles and more," he answered.

Then, as a high deep-throated cheer rang over the midnight sea there came to his stern lips the faint suggestion of a smile.

At dawn the horizons were sharp, hard as glass edges. We ate wheat-cakes for breakfast, and, having eaten, slapped sea water on her decks again. They were warm to the touch. A wisp of smoke that we could nohow smother floated from under the main hatch tarpaulins.

The apprentices unlashed the boats' covers, and saw to it that their water breakers were full.

In the forenoon Haugh, aloft on the fore, called and pointed to the northern horizon.

"Yonder goes a steamer," said one of the hands.

"To —— wid a steamer," retorted Roach, and every one laughed.

In the midst of her crew Mr. Sutherland stood thoughtfully pulling at his long mustache. From the poop the Old Man watched that far away, thin trail of smoke, a wondering look in his eyes.

All day we waited for wind. An hour was an eternity.

Toward evening the breeze came, out of south and west, and brought with it a light drizzle. The ship stole away to the eastward. I was at the wheel. The skipper and mate went below to their wheat-cake supper. All gazing over the water to starboard, the hands were gathered by the bulwarks amid ships.

The second mate left the poop and walked forward. When close to the men he stopped, and looked whither they were looking. As he turned to make for the signal halyards three of them rushed upon him, and bearing him to the deck stifled his attempted outcry.

Tod Costigan ran up to me at the wheel.

"Wot's them flags wot mean's 'All's well,' kid?" he asked.

I hadn't the vaguest idea of what was in his mind as I told him the flags for the "all's well" signal. He darted into the chart-room, and was out again in an instant with the flags in his hand. As he hoisted them I saw a west-bound bark approaching on a parallel course, about a mile away to the south. Tod ran back to his comrades, who were waving to the bark; now slipping from sight and becoming indistinct in a shower. Just as hooting and cheering, they released the second mate, the Old Man and Mr. Sutherland came from the chart-room, and wondering what all the noise was about looked along the deck. The mate saw the fluttering signal above me, and came to my side.

"Who hoisted that signal, boy?" he asked.

"Costigan, sir," I answered.

The Old Man turned and saw the flags. An incredulous look came to his face. A twinkle in his eyes. Mr. Sutherland left me and spoke to him. Side by side they peered after the fast vanishing bark. The hands were cheering. The Old Man looked toward them, and hopelessly shook his head.

We were alone again.

WITH the coming of dark the wind freshened. The ship was growing hotter and hotter, but to wet her down was no longer necessary, for the seas lopped over her bulwarks. All night she drove eastward, staggering under full sail; rolling heavily, and pitching to the sharp swells of a steadily increasing sea. By morning it was blowing so hard that, lest something carry away, we were forced to shorten sail. The saloon was smoky now. Skipper and mates were compelled to eat in the chart-room. Wheat-cakes and coffee were all that any one had. At nightfall we heard the tweak of a fiddle in the fo'c's'le. The men were singing. The chorus rose defiant above the noises of the night.

That night the decks in fo'c's'le and midship house became so hot that we lashed the doors wide to let the sea roll in. All hands kept handy, awake with sea-boots and oilskins on. The sleety wind was bitter. Icy seas swept knee-deep across her deck. His feet braced, the Old Man stood at her helmsman's side, while, clinging to the life-lines, Mr. Sutherland made frequent rounds of the deck. She trembled to the crash of the combers; to the wild wind's lash. The second mate remained on the poop, alone.

At daybreak the wind fell, and by mid forenoon she was becalmed again. Ten miles to the nor'ard lay the black Horn, snow-covered mountains behind it. Sea and sky were leaden and somber. By and by the weather grew showery, and light airs stirred. Patches of the sea were hid in rain. The decks steamed. There was a smell of baking grain, and of burning timber. Smoke curled from the hatches.

At the quick alarm of the mate's whistle men and boys ran aft. The Old Man was gazing toward the south, and looking where he looked we saw the dim shape of a rain-hidden ship.

The rain cleared as Corson and I hoisted a signal—N. C.—the old code signal of a ship in distress.

Followed by Roach and Reuben, Tod Costigan came up to the poop. The other ship was backing her yards in response to our flags.

"Ye'll not be lavin' her, sorr?" called Tod to the Old Man.

As the mate waved him away and ordered the hands to lay our yards aback, he turned to Roach and Reuben.

"T'owld blaygiard's goin' to lave her, b'ys!" he cried.

A murmur arose from the men on the main-deck. The Old Man went to the head of the poop ladder.

"It's your only chance, men," he told them, his face very weary; though about his lips there was a faint suggestion of a smile.

"To —— wid your chance, sorr!" shouted Tod. Stepping close to the Old Man he added—"Sorr, we don't want to be lavin' t'owld hooker."

The Skipper spoke to Mr. Sutherland.

"Clear away a boat, Mister. I'll send the apprentices and cook and steward away."

"Three cheers for t'owld man!" cried Costigan, and the hands replied with a wild delighted yell.

We eight apprentices went up to the poop then. But our Old Man shook his head. His face was very stern, his eyes cold and hard. If to sail her to the Falklands were possible, he could do so with the men.

"Go get your things," he ordered us. "There's no time to lose."

As we turned to leave her Tod approached him again. Nodding toward the second mate he muttered—

"We'll take no orders from that, sorr—not now nor nivver."

As the Old Man called the three eldest apprentices back the second mate's face was yellow white, like the yellow white sail above him.

"You can choose which of you stays to act second mate," he told us.

Corson, Haugh and I drew lots. Our hands shook as we did so. The deck beneath our feet was hot.

The crew cheered as the seven apprentices, cook and steward dropped to the boat. When the second mate went over the side they were silent. My comrades called to me, wishing me luck, and my heart was as cold as a stone.

The breeze was rising, the sea getting up. A shower hid the other ship as our boat pulled alongside her. Then, shouting at the braces, the men squared our yards, and we were on our way again.

Dusk fell. The wind howled. Ropes and sails strained. Each moment it seemed that her masts must rip out of her. When I passed the fo'c's'le at midnight I heard Tod's argumentative voice—

"I'll bet ye a month's wages as she'll nivver see the land agin."

At dawn smoke blew before her in a dense cloud. The squalls raged after her. To leave her now was impossible. A boat could not be cleared in such a sea. No boat could live. The gray backs rolled over her. Naught else kept her decks from bursting. Before noon the fire had eaten through the galley deck. The inside of the carpenter's shop, galley, and apprentices' quarters were burning. Then, lest flame reach them and by them climb higher, we took the mainsail and the foresail off her; smoke whirling below us as we swung on the foot-ropes. The hands had ceased their cheering and their laughing. Their eyes were steady and hard. A sort of savage eagerness in all their faces. During the afternoon the fo'c's'le deck burst through, and they were driven to the poop, to be out of the sea and the heat and the smoke. A flurry of snow whirled over her. They beat cold hands upon their sides. They pummeled big Reuben's huge frame to warm themselves, until he roared:

"Quit ut—quit ut, or I'll step on ye! Git to the fo'c's'le if it's cold ye are."

So the afternoon passed. For supper we ate wheat-cakes, and sipped cold water made brackish by the driven spray. The sea-birds had left her, frightened away.

Throughout the night the Old Man stood by her helmsmen. Throughout the night she raced on. All hands expecting her every leap to be her last. At midnight Mr. Sutherland opened a case of canned stores, and we all had a good feed. No one lay down, or rested. When the wind lulled before the dawning the Old Man called us together. She glowed in deep sea troughs.

"She'll not live through another day, men," he said. "We can make the islands in the boat."

"Are ye sure o' thot, sorr?" asked Costigan.

"There's nothing ever sure at sea," he answered.

The hands talked together for a few minutes. Then, Roach at his side, big Reuben looking down from behind him, Tod spoke again.

"'Tis sailor's weather, sorr," said he. "Let's sail the hooker till she sinks."

They stood there, face to face, hunched to the ship's wild rolling, the Old Man's face a flint—two gleaming crystals in it. He looked at them, from Tod to Roach, from Roach to towering Reuben. They looked at him. No fear in any of their faces.

"Over two hundred miles, boys," said the Old Man.

Big Reuben spoke, his deep voice booming like some hoarse fog-horn on a fog-hid sea.

"Liverpool Irish—sink or swim, sorr!"

Roach sucked his long-empty corn-cob

pipe. Tod winked into the Old Man's face.

The ship rolled on.

An hour was an eternity. Though she left a creaming wake far astern, she seemed scarcely to move. Ropes burned through, and fluttered like smouldering pennants on the following wind. Flurries of hail and snow swept over her. White albatross, jet-winged Cape pigeons, hovered afar.

Night returned. A lone star gleamed. Red sparks whirled to meet it. It vanished, and again the sky was black. Only the red stars now, thick flying o'er the lurid seas about her. The head sails caught, and fell, hissing unheard upon the flame-lit waters at her bow. Fire began to lick her decks. Her seams opened. A steam cloud flew before her, commingled with her clouds of smoke.

"At dawn we leave her," said the Old Man.

"She ain't goin' to last till dawn, sorr," murmured Tod Costigan.

Dawn broke. She rode a moment on a mountain summit. Big Reuben's voice boomed out. She pitched, deep to a murderous hollow. She leapt again, and all her company gazed hard where Reuben pointed. Tod danced and yelled. Black-bearded Roach's corn-cob pipe fell to the deck, its stem bitten through. Men with smoke and salt grimed faces raised a cheer that sounded high above the tumult of the morning. They smote each other with hard hands. They laughed. They swore. They jested. Beyond the clouds that heralded her coming we saw it—land lay ahead.

His confident eyes now on her smoke-wreathed bellying topsails, now on the landward faces of her tumultous crew, our mate stood smiling by her taffrail.

Our Old Man tottered as he walked her poop. His lips were tight. His eyes were shining.

We beached her at Port Stanley. She lies there yet.

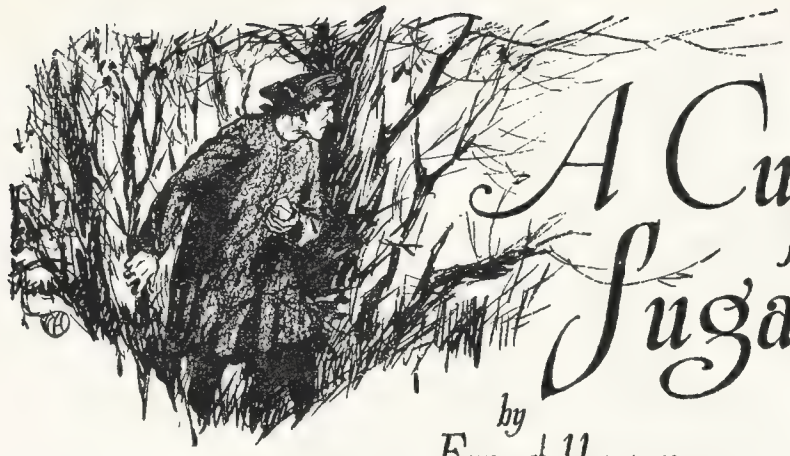
THE THINGS THAT COUNT

by **Raymond S. Spears**

WHAT is an adventure? I remember one night in a skiff on the St. Francis River in Arkansas. I had paddled down all day long in a chill, wintry wind, which lay at dusk, and died into freezing cold as I stretched the canvas over the length of my skiff. I fried two mallards I'd shot that morning, ate them with flapjacks cooked over my yellow-flame oil stove. I listened to a flock of wild geese, travelers, going over. I remember wondering that night, in that lonely eddy, if just sitting there was adventure. Two years before I had nearly gone under at the now famous Muscle Shoals. A few weeks before I went down to my shoulders in cloying mud. After twenty years that quiet night with the ice crinkling around my boat looms as large in my memory as any peril.

I rejoice in uncounted experiences. Picking and choosing among them for relative values, I find myself stumped. I can no more weigh the importance of memories than I can estimate the value of facts. At one time I think a narrow escape was beyond price; at another time a bird song has been equally thrilling; and again I have come upon a statement of fact in the repose of an evening's reading that exhilarated my thoughts for years, as Ruskin's judgment that the color of a rose, as the blossom opens, is the loveliest of all hues.

I do know this: When I have given months to reading about a subject, when I have gone forth to be witness to the region covered—as the Mississippi, or deserts, or green timber wilderness—and when I have returned again and again to the accumulation of facts, observations, ideas, discoveries, notions and all manner of information, I find that every phase, from library study to downright weariness under the pack in loose snow, adds to the joy of living, the joy of retrospect. And when I have neglected books, or harship of lug, or the menaces of gloom and storm—by that much I missed something. My regrets are the things I didn't learn, the chances I didn't take—never the things that I obtained. All life is adventure—for adventurers.



A Cup of Sugar

by Ernest Haycox

Author of "Trial by Fire"

THE young man with the extraordinary Roman nose and ruddy cheeks stood among the rest of the civilian camp-followers and listened to the debate of the soldiers crouched by the fire. Like his immediate neighbors, he wore a farmer's smock and a winter cap; his hands—rather small and tapering for farm use—were encased in homespun mittens, and a cudgel was tucked under his arm as if to indicate he had just come from driving cows. And, also like his immediate neighbors, he listened with a grave, attentive air to the words of the sergeant.

"After all," said the sergeant, shielding the wind-raveled flame of the fire, "war is an affair compounded of gallantry and mutual forbearance amongst Anglo-Saxon men. It is true that our soldiers rot in the British hulks at Wallabout Bay. It is also true that the Hessian ranks contain a precious pack of street sweepings. But when it comes to the fury of actual battle no honest American or British soldier willingly transgresses the decencies."

He nursed the fire with all his skill, piling on wood billets and poking the embers to fresh activity while his comrades edged closer to the rare warmth; and even the ring of civilians crept hopefully inward. In December the west bank of the Delaware was not a comfortable bivouac and the wood huts were like so many dank dungeons. Therefore this particular group of the Ninth Virginia Continental Foot elected to bake and freeze alternately before the open blaze, forgetting their misery in argument. The river was their front view and the bare-leaved forest of oak and maple their back view. On both flanks extended similar groups of close-huddled fighting men, with stray civilians from the Pennsylvania countryside looking on.

"No," added the sergeant, "English temper is good. None of us care to kill in cold blood or refuse a man quarter when he asks it. Magnanimity is a very old and fundamental rule of warfare. It's a sporting game over again with more serious weapons and heavier penalties. We fight for our side and perhaps die for it. But we will not go beyond the rules of the game."

They had talked this over before, condemning this general for acts of wantonness, approving that general's manner. The language sounded a little strange, coming from such ragged and unkempt men. They were all—or nearly all—very young and to the last private they were pinched and worn of face. That could be seen plainly, though the gray twilight broke before a moonless night.

Once, possibly, they had boasted uniforms of similarity; that day was long gone, and at present they wore any cast-off garment that the quartermaster of Washington's army could beg or buy. An overcoat did not exist among them and not all possessed blankets to cover their shoulders. They were in need of razors, of food, of soap and water. But they spoke like men of education; for most of them had ridden behind their own hounds. And the unfit and weak-spirited had been weeded

out in the miserable march through the Jerseys.

"Aye," spoke another, through clattering teeth. "War need not make a man a beast, although, —— me, I feel like a very lousy one. But if a man be a mongrel to start with, then you must not expect him to abide a gentleman's code. As for the Hessians, they're Europe's dregs—or the better part of them are—and they'd sooner steal pewter and plate than do honest labor. But the real British soldier I have respect for. He can fight."

He broke off in a sharp spasm of coughing. A fresher gust of wind swept down upon the circle, plucked at the protecting blankets and worried the fire. To a man they flinched and drew inward, and the small circle of farmers advanced again.

"The river," muttered one, "is ready for ice."

The young man with the Roman nose never so much as changed a muscle of his face.

"Meanwhile," sighed the sergeant, "the British garrison across at Pennington is snug in houses, eating hearty, sleeping well. —— me, I believe the general would do well to risk all in a toss."

There was a stir of legs in the seated group. A burly figure encased from head to foot in buckskin appeared from the shadows and seemed to erupt a violent dissent into the scene. His voice, pitched midway between a growl and a shout, flayed the idea of gallantry.

"——, this air a war, not a spellin' bee! Courtesy, my sweet aunt! Aim to hit an' hit to kill. Ef one way don't go, try another. Put the fear o' God in the redcoat's heart an' make him tremble to hear a gunshot! Make him roll in his sleep an' dream o' havin' his head bashed in! Set up the war-whoop! What else air we fightin' for? I don't like this ring-around-the-rosie talk. Don't aim to freeze all *my* life! Ketch 'em, cut their livers out and show 'em what it is to make war! That'll end the invasion soon enough!"

The sergeant fingered his tabard of authority.

"Ah, McKenzie, I doubt if you've quite absorbed the sentiment of the Ninth Foot on this matter."

"No, by ——, I hain't," muttered McKenzie. "I don't belong to this outfit and I don't have to take any lessons in fightin'. I'm one o' Morgan's Rifles. Wish I hadn't got stuck in the hospital while he went away."

"Guess he'll come back," said the sergeant a little dryly. "I believe you'll be at perfect liberty to rejoin your command then."

The non-commissioned officer was the sole member of the circle who cared to set himself against the newcomer. In truth, McKenzie was a formidable looking character. No man bulked quite so big against the firelight as did he. And though they all were dirty and unshaven, not a single one could match his swart, dour face with the restless, unsmiling Scotch-Irish spirit imprinted on it.

He came from a section of remote upland Virginia that possessed a tradition of wilderness. He belonged to a regiment that was almost fabled even in an army weaned on hardship. Morgan's men had marched five hundred miles in twenty days. Morgan's men had trotted in front of cavalry from dawn to dark with never a stop for rest or food. Morgan's men had more guile and woodcraft than a warrior of the Long House and used a gun with infallible deadliness. No wonder, then, that the circle held its peace and the young farmer with the Roman nose scrutinized him with freshening interest.

McKenzie growled something in a lower key, bit off a piece of twist tobacco and spat in the fire.

"Gallantry! I'd give 'em no more quarter'n I'd 'low an Injun. Ketch some nice English officer an' make an example. Thar's a heap too much politeness in this war. Cut his liver out!"

"You realize, I suppose," put in the sergeant, "that we're supposed to be civilized people, dealing with other civilized people! And if we give no quarter we shall only be heaping coals on our own heads."

"I ask no man's quarter," persisted McKenzie, doubling his fist.

The interminable bitter wind swept along the river with added strength. There was a stray shot somewhere in the camp and a sentry, not far off, challenged in stentorian voice. The man with the Roman nose kept his attention on McKenzie while the rest of the circle huddled over the blaze. Night fell abruptly as a shutter on a window. Men trembled with misery and some one choked in a great sighing cough.

One stripling unwrapped a burlap sack from his feet and began chafing blood into them. McKenzie looked upon the operation with a sour eye.

"Then talk of gallantry," he muttered.

Some one moved up through the darkness, and bent quickly over this soldier of Morgan's Rifles.

"Brigadier wants to see you," he whispered. "In the hut nearest the trees. Don't be too conspicuous in entering."

McKenzie closed his thin lips and scratched the stubble on his jaws. A crafty slantwise gaze swept the gathering; after a moment he slapped his leg and roared:

"My gun! Tryin' to steal *my* gun? I'll skin him alive!"

He sprang up, roughly shouldered aside the civilians and ducked into the enveloping darkness.

IT WAS but a dozen paces to his own hut. He swept the scene of fires behind him, circled the hut and struck across a stumpy clearing, guiding himself by a lantern gleaming through a window. Within a few yards of the place he was challenged by a guard and replied with the countersign. The hut door opened and a junior officer beckoned.

"Come, don't stand there while the wind blows through."

McKenzie entered and stood blinking at the unaccustomed light while the door slammed and the junior officer dragged his spurs across the puncheoned floor. The brigadier was perched forlornly on a camp stool with a blanket swaddling him and his hat pulled over his ears. A small map was on the table and the brigadier's stiff finger seemed to be marking a particular spot.

"Lieutenant Montoe tells me you are one of Morgan's men?"

"True enough. And I'd go fifty miles to ketch up with him wherever he is."

"If it is marching you want," said the brigadier, "I'll satisfy the desire. I need some information. Some very important information upon which depends, perhaps, the subsequent movement of the army. I tell you this only to impress the importance of it upon you. It involves crossing the river and entering the enemy's line. I had thought of a particular Virginian for the work, but on general principles a Morgan man is better fitted for the job."

A wisp of that December wind found way through a crack in the logs. The lantern guttered and the brigadier wrapped the blanket more closely to him. The junior officer strode over to shield the light with numb, clumsy fingers.

"I want you to go into Pennington and find out how many men are quartered there. You will go in the guise of a cattle drover. Circulate among the soldiers if possible and observe their regimentals. Find if there has been any shifting of troops, if you can do it. Don't tarry too long, however. I should like to have you back this night save one."

The junior officer tapped McKenzie on the shoulder.

"There's a drover's outfit and smock in the corner. Strip off your buckskins and crawl into them."

"Hate to ask any man to change clothes in this dungeon," growled the brigadier. "Hurry, man, or you'll turn to an icicle."

McKenzie buttoned the smock.

"I'd better hustle back for my gun."

"No gun. You are a peaceful cattle drover and have no license to carry a weapon."

McKenzie scratched his whiskers.

"Hate to go without Betsy," he objected. "Thar's liable to be somebody foolin' with it."

"I shall have it brought to my quarters," promised the general. "Now, mind my instructions. Don't ask too many questions, and avoid all contention. Nor would I make up any involved story. It will only trap you. Being a civilian you will doubtless be forced to take a great deal of chaff from the English officers. Don't let it disturb your purpose."

"If I ketch one in a handy place," muttered McKenzie, "I'm like to cut his liver out."

"The stamp of Morgan's Rifles is apparent," said the general. "There is a boat on the beach below the guard-house waiting to take you across. This night, save one, it will be there to bring you back."

"Ef it hain't there I'll swim," promised McKenzie, reaching for his tobacco.

"I'm convinced you would," agreed the brigadier. The misery of sitting in the cold chair was too much. He got up and stamped his feet. "I may add that the commander-in-chief expects you to get this information. Let that strengthen your purpose. All understood? Very well."

"Hark," said the junior officer.

The sentry had challenged. The click of his musket-lock carried into the room. There was a padding of feet, an oath, and then the sharp report of the gun. The junior officer jumped for the door and the brigadier extinguished the lantern light with his palm.

"Hurry out," said he.

McKenzie slipped past the sentry who was spluttering angrily to the junior officer. As the man of Morgan's Rifles picked his way back toward the fires he heard the sentry saying:

"Some one comin' around the corner, sir. Dunno how long he'd been there. Didn't halt so I let drive. He run toward the trees."

McKenzie stopped before his hut and reluctantly thought of his gun.

"I'd like to take it. Shore's I'm born it'll be stoled or fooled with ef the gineral don't keep it." He moved on just beyond the aura of the camp-fire's glow, but was able to see the men around it. The sergeant still talked and the young lad continued to chafe his frozen feet.

And the young farmer with the Roman nose had disappeared.

McKENZIE was rowed across the river by a man he neither saw nor knew. On the open stretch of water the wind flung itself against the craft and cut like a knife. Once beached on the farther side he heard his guide mutter—

"Be here night after next, waitin'."

The oars splashed again and he was left alone on the hostile Jersey shore. To remain quiet in such blizzard weather was impossible. There was no shelter. He groped down the rocky stretch until his feet struck wagon ruts. These he followed up the bank and between walls of brush.

It was around eight miles to the village of Pennington. McKenzie oriented himself much as a pigeon might circle and point homeward. He would not have been a member of Morgan's Rifles without the aptitude for woodcraft and tracking strongly developed; and as he broke into a shambling trot and skimmed over the frozen earth, he kept his eyes fixed on a winking farm light to his right flank. It served him as a compass point until he got abreast of it and heard the challenge of a pack of hounds. Some one flung open the door and cried—

"Who's there?"

McKenzie slid forward without replying, rubbing his ears against the freezing gale and listening for a warning of British pickets.

It was not long before he picked up the lights of another house and then in a little while a cluster of them, indicating where a group of buildings formed a roadside hamlet. At once he dropped to a more cautious gait and kept well to one side of the highway, ready for a dive into the brush.

He was saved the trouble. A lantern swung around a house corner and by its dim rays he saw a file of soldiers advance, well muffled in great-coats and wool neck-pieces. Thirty yards in front of him they halted at a perfunctory challenge. The old sentry came to view. There was a presenting of arms, a click of musket locks and an exchange of men. The file turned and dipped into a side trail. McKenzie wasted no time. He hurried up and by the new sentry, whose shuffling feet he could hear, and was within British territory.

"Eh," he muttered, "he must think this a parade ground."

He had a very great contempt for the exact way these soldiers mounted guard and walked post. Morgan men did it differently. When time came to change sentries the new man picked up his gun and sallied forth to find his place while the old picket came in. No formality and no nonsense. Parading was one thing; fighting another.

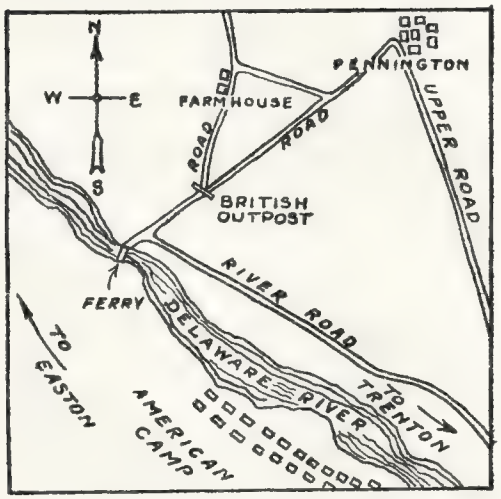
Then he arrived at a turn in the road and saw a window beaming openly, with the silhouette of soldiers moving inside. He found his way across what appeared to be a barnyard and approached the window's sill, keeping well out of the gush of yellow rays. Evidently this was a very small post—perhaps mounting three or four different pickets along the roads to Pennington; he saw a small dozen soldiers scattered around the rather large room, smoking and chaffering. He took note of their uniforms and paid especial attention to a clutter of beer bottles on the table. It was not far from Christmas and already they were celebrating.

With the picture printed in his mind he returned to the road and continued the march. There was another house on the opposite side of the highway and so near

did McKenzie's feet take him that he saw the crimson and blue pipings of an officer's coat hanging over a chair back. The officer himself was pushing a quill rapidly across some fresh paper. That, decided Morgan's man, was the lieutenant in charge of this guard. He broke into a swifter gait and left the hamlet behind.

It continued to be cold to the point of agony. His feet were greatly bruised by the frozen ground and his eyes stung. So when at the end of an hour he heard the tinkle of a cow-bell, he decided to find the barn from whence it came and seek a night's lodging. It fitted well with his plan to take the road again at early dawn, get breakfast at the first farmhouse and thence walk boldly along the road into Pennington. The cow-bell clanked nearer at hand. McKenzie's outstretched hand found a fence, which he climbed over, and came into contact with a pump handle.

By and by he reached the barn wall and traced a way to a small door. He unfastened the hasp, stepped quickly inside and listened for the sound of bedded ani-



mals. His experience led him presently to the loft; he buried himself deep in the hay and promptly fell asleep, with as little concern as if he were within the shelter of his own log hut beyond the Delaware.

A kind of gray fog was sifting through the barn when he woke next morning and he heard the rattle of a tin pail, followed by the sound of milking. He raised himself cautiously and saw a lantern flickering, beside which sat an elderly, white-bearded farmer. McKenzie passed a hand across his stubbled face and coughed.

"Guess you've got a boarder, old man."

The farmer jerked up his head and a hand went toward a pitchfork.

"Ne'mind," said McKenzie, sliding down the incline. "I'm no cussed straggler. Got lost on the road last night an' couldn't find shelter. Saw this barn and thought I'd get out o' the wind before I frozed. Didn't want to bother nobody in the house."

"Strange doin's," muttered the farmer. "Don't care about any one foolin' 'round my barn, mister. I'd put the gun to ye, if I'd seen ye tryin' to crawl in last night."

A shrewd pair of eyes darted over McKenzie's apparel.

"Guess I know that," chuckled McKenzie, "I didn't make no noise. But a man's got to sleep, old fella, and it was shore cold. Lost my way."

"There's taverns on the road," answered the farmer. "Whyn't ye use em?"

"I said I lost my way," repeated McKenzie. "Comin' down from Easton and I missed the road I guess."

The farmer was murmuring something to himself.

"Queer ye don't know the country. Where'd that blood-stain on ye're smock come from?"

"I'm a drover," answered McKenzie. "Butcherin' cows does that. Comin' down from Easton to Pennington. Heard the troops wanted fresh meat and thought I'd see if I could make a dicker." He reached into his pocket and brought out a piece of silver. "Don't blame you for bein' curious. Here's bed money and I'd be right grateful for a bite o' breakfast."

The farmer took the piece with a quick, avid gesture and got up from his stool.

"Well," said he, "it's King's money. That's some show of yer politics. Can't be too careful these days. If I harbored a rebel they'd hang me snappin' quick, I tell ye. I'm an honest friend o' the King and I'll abide no spies."

McKenzie nodded his head and held his peace. The farmer rubbed the silver piece with a calloused thumb and shot reassuring glances at the intruder.

"Well, come to breakfast then and I'll put ye on the right road to town."

He led McKenzie across the barnyard to the house. The latter stepped gratefully into the kitchen, where a warm fire leaped on

the stone, and sat in a chair while the farmer swung the teapot over the blaze and set another plate on the table. Of a sudden a weak voice trailed from a half-opened bedroom door.

"John, who be that with ye?"

"A drover from Easton," replied the farmer; and McKenzie made out at once the quick softening of tone. "Goin' to town an' got lost on the road."

He drew off the tea, poured it and set a loaf of bread in front of the soldier.

"Ye'll go without sugar," said the farmer with a bitterness creeping into his words. "There ain't a drop in the house."

"Give the gentleman a good plate to eat from," advised the feeble voice. "Those in the cupboard."

"Aye," said the farmer, but he made no move from his seat. The expressive, shrewd eyes were filled with despair. He spoke in a swift, lowered tone. "Not a pen'worth of sugar in the house and worth a man's farm to buy an ounce! There's my wife, dreadful weak and sick these two months now. Winter settin' in and nothin' to get her strength back with, 'cept bacon an' spuds. A little hot water'n sugar'd do her wonderful good, but where'm I goin' to get it?"

He watched McKenzie eat for a space.

"Darn sech a war! It takes all a poor man's got and gives him nothin' back. Soldiers feed well enough. Oh, aye! But the farmer can go without. —— the rebels! Whyn't they let well enough be? It was peaceful before and nobody suffered like we do now. I tell you a few New England hotheads brought on this misery!

"So," replied McKenzie noncommitally. "Guess it's hard on all alike."

Dissembling ill-suited him and the anger flowed quickly upward at this berating of his cause. He stared at the floor and finished his meal.

"I wish they'd drive Washington and his miserable pack clean beyant the Alleghanies! See the trouble they've brought me. Why, man, I'd give my right hand fer a cup o' sugar!"

The thin voice broke in.

"Don't talk such, John. It ain't respectable. Mister, you'll excuse an old woman for not gettin' up. But it'd be right handsome to see a neighbor's face again.

McKenzie rose and pushed open the bedroom door. Sunk in the wide canopied bed he saw a wisp of a woman with gaunt cheeks and black, tragic eyes. Once upon a time she might have been fair looking; now it appeared as if the tide of vitality had ebbed far out. There was scarcely any sign of life in her save for an occasional rolling of her hand on the counterpane. McKenzie, long inured to the presence of suffering men, was a little disturbed at the sight of a woman on the edge of death. He rubbed his whiskers, clucked his tongue and tried to put a shade of sympathy on his dour, ugly face.

"It's right nice to see new people," said she. "Goin' to Pennington, be you? My, it's been three year since I stepped out of my folks' house there! Guess I wouldn't know the place now. Maybe you've been to Philadelphia, too?"

"Not sech a long spell back," agreed McKenzie.

"My sister married and went there to live thirty years ago. Ain't seen her since. It must be a terrible big place."

She talked on, her eyes never leaving the unhandsome visage and her hand now and again twitching on the white spread. McKenzie nodded gravely and at last the farmer shook his head at the woman and drew the visitor out.

"Don't talk so much, Amy. It wears you plumb out."

"High time I was on the road," said McKenzie.

"Guess you wandered some last night," put in the farmer. "The main road is to the right. Take the next path you see beyant this house. To the right. It'll bring you smack on the highway. Two miles more'll find you in town. I'm off the main road, but that's more a blessin' than a hindrance. No soldiers clutterin' up the place an' raisin' Ned."

He stood on the door-sill and watched McKenzie stride through the gate.

"I wouldn't mind goin' to Pennington," he added wistfully, "totry fer a speck o' sugar. Mister, I'd give half this farm fer a cup of it. Jest a cup o' sugar. Darn sech a war."

McKENZIE waved a hand and shortly was traveling through a sparse pine forest. The farmhouse disappeared behind a sluggish morning fog that billowed over the ground, cold and raw. A grouse beat

heavily from its covert. McKenzie shook his head.

"Why," said he, "she wasn't much more'n a skeleton. Poor creature. Shore don't seem jest right."

Presently he embarked on the main highway, and when a wintry sun ventured to show itself momentarily in the sullen sky he came to Pennington, identified himself as a loyal drover to the sentry and walked through the main street of the small village.

The brigadier had warned him against forging a too complicated story or speaking more than required; but the drover's costume had suggested to McKenzie a little tale that fitted well with his Scotch-Irish nature. A measure of the taciturnity on his face vanished and he clucked his tongue in amusement. Presently he stood before what once had been a large meeting-house, but now was transformed into a kitchen or mess hall. He saw, through an open door, cooks bustling about and one lone officer scratching his head over a sheaf of papers. He walked in.

"Lookin' fer the man who buys beef," said he to the officer.

The officer looked sharply from his papers.

"Well?"

"I'm a drover from Easton way. Heard it said you might be needin' meat."

"Might be needing meat!" mimicked the officer harshly. "Is this another of your Loyalist jokes?"

"Said nothin' about jokes," replied McKenzie briefly. "Was speakin' o' beef."

"Of course we need beef. Detachment's not fed on gruel."

"Guess I could supply you with some critters. How many men you feedin', and what price do I get?"

The officer shook his head.

"Never mind price. How do you propose to bring cattle in from the northern part with all these cursed bands of rebel troopers knocking things about? And where, may I ask, are these cattle?"

"My secret," replied McKenzie with a finger laid alongside his nose. He enjoyed his fiction immensely. "Ain't lived in this country for twenty years, Captain, 'thout knowin' a few tricks. I deliver the cattle you need, at my price."

"What price?"

"Ten pence the pound, on hoof."

The captain said a short and bitter word.

"I suppose the king's leg must always be pulled in this cursed land. We fight for you Loyalists and you rob us in return."

"Some risk to the affair, Captain. Might lose some critters on the road and mebbe my hide. Who's to stand the loss of that?"

"Very well, I accept the offer. Never mind numbers. Bring in all you have—which can't be so many."

McKenzie nodded, rubbed his cheeks and stared at a tub of white sugar which one of the cooks now dipped into.

"Know a man who'd trade a fine cow for jest a mite of that sweet stuff. It means more'n money to some folks."

"At fifty shillin's the pound I imagine it would," countered the officer. But he considered the matter briefly and drew the cook's attention. "Put up a little of that for this man."

McKenzie took the prized package when it was offered and tucked it carefully under his arm.

"Good bargain," said he, turning toward the door. He enlarged upon his story and turned on the threshold. "Be back in two days with ten-fifteen prime, seal-fat animals. G'day, Captain."

He walked slowly down the street. Out in a meadow the troops were standing parade, bending stiffly against a sweeping wind and he fashioned his route to bring him along the edge of the ranks. His active memory took in the details of their dress and accouterment; he made a swift survey of their numbers and envied the neatness and warmth of their clothes. They were well fed and none had the lean, frozen look which was so habitual with his own comrades. He even found time to watch the officers dress the lines and hear some of the British manual.

Satisfied, he strolled deliberately on, arm tightly holding the package of sugar. There was a street leading almost directly into the road whence he had come, skirting the pine trees. Down this he traveled, reached the sentry once more and was prompted to make a remark.

"Seems like less troops here since I come by last time. Hope you ain't desertin' us to the rebels."

The sentry shifted his gun and looked disgusted.

"Suit me if we let you whole pack o' rascals go to ——. If there's less men it's the climate that carried 'em off."

McKenzie nodded and went on, trudging

against the wind with his head bowed and an ironic flicker in his eyes. "Paradin' like a bean-pole," he muttered. "An' what good does he do?"

He heard the drumming hoofs of a horse and, on looking up, saw a rider spurring rapidly toward him, bound for town. Some officer or scout, no doubt, bound back from a mission. McKenzie drew off to the side and leaned against a tree, waiting for the soldier to pass. The horse shied at sight of the ragged, unkempt pedestrian and presently McKenzie got a clear view of a young, ruddy face—whipped crimson by the wind—graced by an extraordinary Roman nose.

For an instant McKenzie felt a twitching of his memory and he stared harder. The horse reared high and swung about. The young fellow—dressed in the regimentals of a cornet—reached for his pistol in the saddle holster and cried out strongly—

"Stay there, you —— spy."

McKenzie's memory served him swiftly. Here was one of those farmers who had stood around the camp-fire the previous night. He watched the pistol's muzzle swoop down upon him at pointblank range. The cornet issued another summary command and a sentry was swinging up on the double. McKenzie filled his lungs, gripped the sugar more tightly and jumped sidewise into the brush.

The pistol cracked and the cornet slid from his saddle with a warning. A series of lunging strides took the fugitive into the deeper tangle of underwood. The sentry's gun banged and ripped up a path in the leaf-mold; he heard the officer cursing at his saber which seemed to impede the pursuit and it caused him to cluck his tongue in amusement.

"Tryin' to ketch a Morgan man! Shucks!"

It was, indeed, useless. In fifteen minutes McKenzie had lost sound of his pursuers and leisurely swung around in his course, pointing westward toward the Delaware.

He knew the cornet would shortly be scouring the highways and cross-roads with troops. He knew also that a general alarm would likely be sent out. Every ford or ferry along the Delaware would be watched. Still, it gave him little concern. His faith in his own ability was proof against panic; they could not beat through the woods with any success and he had only to parallel the roads until night and then cross the river.

Traveling was slower through the thicket. He flushed all manner of small game and beat a laborious path up and down marshy glens. It was around noon when the sound of a swiftly moving cavalcade came to him. There was a swishing of leaves, an impatient word or two and the sound died out. McKenzie moved discreetly and pushed aside a clump of scrub oak to find himself upon a road that looked familiar. It was the route he had taken earlier in the morning from the farm to the main highway. The horsemen had galloped, according to the signs, eastward toward town. McKenzie rubbed his cheek and growled.

"They'll be closin' up the roads, certain. But tryin' to ketch a Morgan man!"

He stood irresolute, still scratching his whiskers, now and again staring speculatively at the package of sugar clutched under his arm. A seam of the sack had burst and he observed with a cluck of annoyance that part of the precious burden was sifting out. He turned the sack side for side and tasted the sugar with wetted finger smacking his lips over so rare a treat.

"Swear to Goshen, that's shore good. Come this far with it," he muttered, "might as well go on. Poor little woman—wasn't nothin' but skin an' bones. Jest a shadow. If sugar'll do her good here's shore enough to fill them holler spots."

To think was to act. He crossed the road at a lope and worked his way into the brush.

"——, they can't catch a Morgan man, nohow."

FOR all his woodcraft, he was half the afternoon in traversing the particularly rugged piece of country between the farm and the highway; his heavy shoes bothered him with their noise; he was too much inured to moccasins and buckskin to care for the awkward garments of a drover. More than once he made springing jumps from log to log or across creeks, only to go sprawling for want of footing. By and by he ventured upon a path and heard the splashing of a mill-dam. He .trotted fifty yards and found himself in the rear of the barn he had used the previous night. He vaulted over a fence, noted that recent hoofprints were in the frozen road, and walked to the house door.

He knocked twice before he heard the

woman's frail voice bidding him enter, and he opened the door and crossed the kitchen to find her sitting before the open fire, bundled in quilts.

"I was a mite afraid," she whispered, twitching the inert hands. "So many queer people hereabouts. But I thought of the Lord's will and that helped. My, you're very wet."

He had expected to speak to the farmer. With a woman he was not prepared to deal and the best he could do was deposit the sugar on the table with a curt gesture and mutter—

"Somethin' to pay fer bed and breakfast."

She saw the fine grains sifting out of the sack and her eyes brightened.

"Sweetenin'? Why, mister, I ain't tasted a mite o' sweetenin' in many long months. Oh, my, my." Then her face clouded. "No, I can't take it. We can't pay for it."

"Ain't asked for pay," said he, gruffly. "It's to pay for my bed an' breakfast. Where's yore man?"

"Out with the soldiers. There's a spy around and he's helpin to ketch the man. Hark, mister, ain't that horses down the road?"

McKenzie was already at the window. The farmer and the cornet swept into sight with a file of dragoons behind them, drew sharply up at the gate and dismounted. The fugitive swung around and sought for a handy exit.

"Where's the back door?"

She followed every gesture; she saw the quick flaring of emotion, the rising aggressiveness in the bold, ugly face. There was a twitch of her hand and a slight breathless cry that seemed meant for a laugh but failed of its purpose.

"La! Who am I shelterin'?"

He ran to the bedroom door and saw a window opening on the back yard. A single whisper stopped him.

"Not that way. They'll see you. T'other door lets you to the pantry an' smoke-house. Take it."

A curt oath came through to them.

"Somebody's wet footprints on that stone flag! Yours, farmer?"

Mckenzie swung for the indicated door. On the verge of flight his flaring eyes dropped to the package of sugar and stopped him dead still.

"Shucks!" he muttered and with a single gesture swept the package from the table and jumped to the mantel over the fireplace. There was a collection of crocks and pans arrayed along the ledge and he jammed the sugar into one such and flung himself again to the exit. He was too late. The front door swung open. A dragoon rammed his pistol through a window and trained it on McKenzie. He heard another beating up the back yard. The farmer stumbled across the threshold, closely followed by the cornet.

"Flushed the fox that time!" cried the cornet, rubbing his Roman nose. —— me, but you're an elusive creature! Think to fool the King's troopers, eh?"

The farmer raised a threatening arm.

"Make a rebel's harbor o' my house, will ye? They'll hang ye snappin' quick fer this. A cussed spy! I'm an honest man and I'll abide no traitors here."

"Stop yore bellerin'," growled McKenzie. "You ain't been shot."

It was around four o'clock and the early winter twilight was darkening the room. The cornet came closer and peered at the stubbled features of his captive.

"You're the firebrand, the liver-eater, eh? You're the one who'd like to make war an affair of butchering. Blessed fine attitude, that. Even the gentlemen of your own ranks can't stomach you."

"You a parson?" growled McKenzie.

"No, my lad, but you'll be soon needing a parson to help your soul to perdition."

"Expect I'd be in some smart comp'ny at that," said the captive.

He reached into his smock for his tobacco and the motion set three dragoons upon him.

"Search the man," ordered the cornet.

"John," called the woman in a trembling voice. "It's come to be awful hot in here. Open the pantry door half-way."

The searchers found nothing on McKenzie and stepped back. The cornet fingered his saber hilt.

"It makes no difference, you'll hang quick enough. Absolute evidence. And your opinions on killing men in cold blood won't help you, either."

"Shucks," said McKenzie. "Yo're jest a snippet of a boy and all swelled from the work you did across the river. Tell you what: Jest give me one o' those sabers and we'll have it out. Best man wins. If I git the upper hand, you'll let me go. Otherwise I'll come along like a peaceful child."

"You'll come, well enough," replied the

cornet. "And why should we give you another chance?"

"Fortune o' war. Jest a turn o' the dice and you'd been ketched 'stead o' me. Make it a fair an' square proposition."

"Rot!"

The farmer moved.

"It's gettin' dark early. Guess I'll light the candles.

Once again the woman spoke up.

"Not jest yet, John. It hurts my eyes."

McKenzie turned his face toward her. She was relaxed in the chair, her chin tilted upward and her eyes fixed on him. Then he saw that one finger was moving up and down in her lap; rising and falling with an inconspicuous, yet persistent gesture; pointing toward the pantry door.

The cornet strode toward the fire and McKenzie revolved on his heel until he stood looking at the half-open pantry door; could see the gray fog of the outer world.

"No," repeated the cornet. "Even if you spoke the truth, I could only fight a gentleman. And you, obviously, are not that."

The farmer was beside his wife, near the cornet. Three dragoons were leaning on their guns within the threshold of the front door and two were out by the horses. Somewhere in or around the premises was a sixth, that McKenzie knew. Where, he could not tell. He drew a breath.

"No, by ——, I'm a Morgan man!"

The cornet came to life and tried to intercept McKenzie. The fugitive was at the pantry door and through it before the dragoons could raise their guns. He slammed it against the suddenly aroused confusion, ran through the corridor-like pantry and found himself out in the open near the smoke-house. The brush was but three strides away.

From the corner of his eye he saw the sixth dragoon charge around a side of the house. A gun roared and the bullet splintered the smoke-house wall. Of a sudden the full cry of pursuit welled out from the pantry and another shot sprayed McKenzie's cheek with splinters of the frozen ground. He plunged onward, slipped in a mud puddle and clawed for the brush. It was the second time that day he had fled before fire. He struck the mill-dam midway and took an icy bath, gasping from the shock of it. The trail beckoned him and he raced into cover as a whole volley whipped the brush at his heels. He ran down the path, headed for the deep forest, muttering his contempt.

"Always did say a British soldier shot terrible low. Couldn't hit the broad side of a barn. Tryin' to ketch a Morgan man!"

And after a quarter mile he broke into a rough amusement.

"Haw! Tryin' to ketch a Morgan man! Shucks, I had to hide that sugar or they'd took it. Poor woman. Hope it helps her."

THE brigadier sat in the cold chair with a blanket wrapped tightly around him and rubbing his blue hands. He listened attentively to McKenzie's report, noting down such figures and details as the scout gave him, meanwhile marveling at the spectacle he saw by the lantern light. The smock was gone and had been torn apart to cover the man's feet in place of the clumsy shoes. The shirt and trousers were covered with mud and crusted with fine ice. There was a cherry-colored stain on one sleeve, and behind the heavy growth of whiskers the man's eyes seemed sunken in black pits. Still he chawed at his tobacco and finished the report.

"Well done," said the brigadier, stamping his feet on the floor. "You were not to meet the boatman until tomorrow night. How did you cross the river?"

"Clumb a floatin' log an' paddled over," said McKenzie. He saw his beloved Betsy standing in a corner and reached for it. "Shore obliged, Gineral, fer keepin' my gun."

The brigadier rose and trailed around the room in his blanket.

"How would you like to be a sergeant, McKenzie?"

Morgan's man suddenly looked worried.

"Naw, sir. I know I'm a good soldier, but there ain't no tellin' how poor a sergeant I'd be."

"Then let me give you a new French musket, just arrived."

"Hunh. So long's I can fight Betsy will shoot plumb center."

The general nodded and dismissed the scout. McKenzie groped through the dark clearing and made for the cheer and warmth of the camp-fire by his hut. The same group crouched by the blaze and told stories. They made way for him and he took his seat without comment. But he had hardly relaxed when the sergeant got upon contentious ground again and condemned some

fresh barbarity on the New York frontier. The circle moved and was startled by a voice, pitched midway between a growl and a shout.

"Well, ain't that war?" demanded McKenzie. "Such ring-around-the-rosie talk makes me plumb hot. Shoot to hit and hit to kill! Ketch 'em and cut their livers out! Make an example, by ——! I'm all fer showin' no mercy—men, women or kids! Kill their heart fer war!"

The sergeant broke in.

"I doubt if you understand the sentiment of the Ninth Foot on that matter."

McKenzie chewed his tobacco and scratched his whiskers.

"Naw! I'm a Morgan man."

WORDS

by **Raymond W. Thorp**

SHOWING to what length lawyers will sometimes go in introducing masses of legal verbiage in a criminal case, the following is the text of the first indictment for murder returned in the Louisiana Territory after its cession to the United States. This charge was preferred by the first American grand jury to meet north of the Missouri River, acting on the first murder within the "palatinate" of which Daniel Boone, living at Femme Osage, Missouri, was commandant and magistrate:

"That one James Davis, late of the district of Saint Charles, in the Territory of Louisiana, laborer, not having the fear of God before his eyes, but being moved and seduced by the instigation of the Devil, on the thirteenth day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand eight-hundred and four (1804), at a place called Femme Osage, in the said district of Saint Charles, with force of arms, in and upon William Hays, in the peace of God and the United States, there and then feloniously, wilfully, and with malice aforethought, did make an assault, and that the said James Davis, with a certain rifle gun, four feet long, and of the value of five dollars, then and there loaded and charged with gunpowder and one leaden bullet, with said rifle gun the said James Davis, then and there in his hands had and held, fired and killed William Hays."

This case must have been justified, however, as the said James Davis who killed the said William Hays with a "rifle gun four feet long and worth five dollars," properly and fully charged with deadly missile and force necessary to propel same with force sufficient to kill, was freed by the grand jury on $3,000 bond pending trial and Commandant Boone signed the bond. And at the trial the said James Davis was "cleared."

"TWO-BITS"!

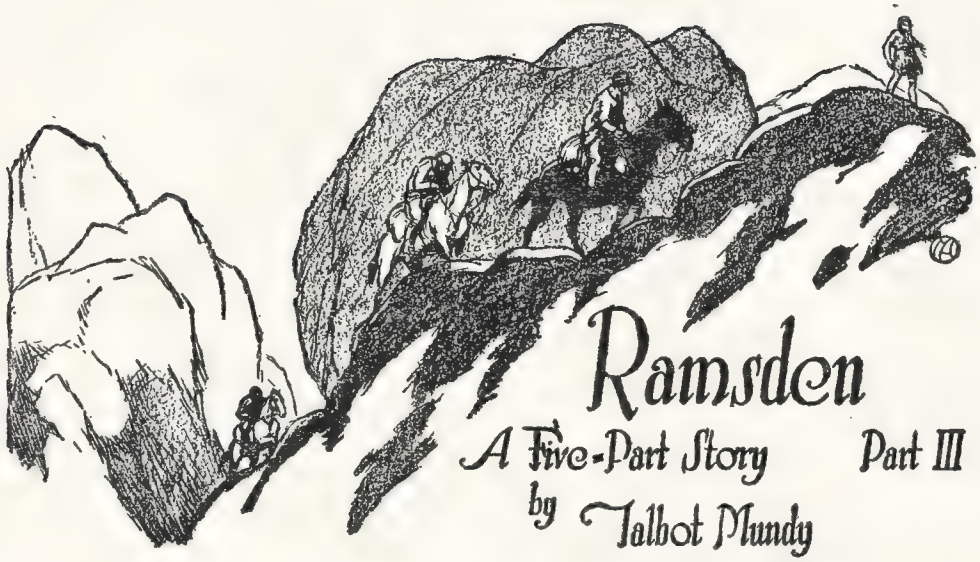
Whence came that name or expression, which we hear so frequently in everyday life? Not very many people know, and as it should naturally be of interest to all those who have used or heard the term, the explanation is given as follows:

At the corner of Broad and Church Streets, Charleston, S. C., there stands today a building which was during the 18th Century used as a tavern—known as Shepherd's Thatched Roof.

In 1737 a certain coterie of gentlemen met once a week in this tavern, and each donated a sum—about two bits—to charity. These men were not organized, but nevertheless were soon christened with the euphonious title of The Two Bits Club.

The expression, two bits, meaning a quarter of a dollar, comes from the early use of the Spanish real as a coin. The real having the value of one-eighth of a dollar, was called the New York Shilling. In the Southern States these coins, on account of their small value, were called bits, and it took two of them to make a quarter. And so, in this old building which still stands strong and sturdy in spite of its great age, was coined the expression which we still hear many times daily—

"Two-bits."



Ramsden

A Five-Part Story — Part III

by Talbot Mundy

Author of "Tros of Samothrace," "The Dancing Girl of Gades," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

RAIT and I were in Darjiling when I received a letter from one Elmer Rait, with whom I had been in partnership. He said that he was in Tibet looking for a place called Sham-bha-la, where there were ancient manuscripts beyond price; and begged me to come and help him. He said he thought he could get there, but was equally sure that he couldn't get back.

At the time, the Tibetan border was closed by both the British and the Tibetans, so we had to move carefully. We took the *babu* Chullunder Ghose, and picked up Narayan Singh, the fighting Sikh, at Delhi. Then we went to the house of Benjamin, who knew more about the East than any one we could think of.

Benjamin objected, but finally gave us letters which would take us through his secret route on our promise to look up his son-in-law, who was lost in Tibet.

He dyed my skin and Grim's, and we went forward. Two Tibetans, Tsang-Yang and Tsang-Mondrong, dogged our steps and we had to keep them with us so they wouldn't betray us. One of them had a wallet containing another plea for help from Rait, which he had stolen from the other. So, they made us safe—while fighting among themselves.

The message was in code embodied in a very personal letter a woman had written to Rait. It showed him up for the utter cad we already knew him to be.

When we were camped at the mouth of the Zogi-la pass Mordecai, Benjamin's son-in-law, came staggering in out of a blizzard with a horrible tale of his experiences among the Tibetan monks, and of the treachery of Rait who had betrayed him into their hands. He died the same night and we pushed on through the storm-bound pass to the town of Leh and the fortified house of Sidiki ben Mahommed, a friend of Mordecai's.

Here there came to us two visitors. The first was Lhaten a quiet, forceful man with blue eyes and a ring that covered a whole joint of his finger. He warned us of the difficulty of entering Sham-bha-la, and gave much good advice mingled with cryptic utterances about the way we might or might not travel. He seemed to be "on the inside" of the mysterious forces of this mysterious country, and Sidiki ben Mahommed paid him great respect.

After he had gone, we heard a great commotion outside and found the two Tibetans, Tsang-Yang and Tsang-Mondrong, dead in the yard, with their noses and ears cut off. When we came back we found our second visitor.

He was a tall, strong-looking man with yellow eyes and a mass of black hair. His manner was insolent and he warned us against Lhaten. Also, he told us that he could help us rescue Rait, and in proof showed us a letter from my former partner saying that he was a prisoner and being tortured.

We tried to take the man with us, and he hypnotized Narayan Singh into putting away his gun, and by some equally strange trick, threw me into a corner.

Sidiki ben Mahommed was worried about the murders, so we started out again through the snow, and were hardly on our way before Sidiki's house, fired by his newest wife, burst into flames. Later, we were waylaid by thugs, and I lost so much blood in the encounter that I fainted and had to be carried.

CHAPTER XII

DUGPAS

I RECOVERED consciousness inside a monastery. All of us, Sidiki included, were occupying one large cell. The solitary window, facing southward, was unglazed; its wooden shutter stood open to allow smoke to escape from a stone hearth in the middle of the floor; there was no hole overhead—no chimney of any kind. Through the window was a view of snow-clad ranges, and from the cot on which I lay facing the window it looked as if we were suspended in mid-air.

Grim told me we had been there three days and were likely to have to wait another ten before I should be fit to travel. I got off the bed to try my strength and nearly fell. He helped me to the window and I leaned out; there was a sheer drop straight under us of at least a thousand feet, and below that again, a rocky slope of twice the depth, that looked impossible to climb. No eagle had a nest more dizzily inaccessible. I returned to the bed feeling weaker than ever, and there was another lapse of consciousness.

When I came to my senses again there was an old monk in the room; he had a big black bottle in his hand, and by the filthy taste in my mouth I judged he had been dosing me. Sidiki ben Mahommed was leaning over me, saying in the Kashmiri dialect of Ladakh:

"You must save him! You must save him! He owes me money!"

The old monk's face was like polished ivory that had been smeared with lamp-smoke—easy-going and good-natured but regarding life through little slant eyes as a temporary inconvenience to be tolerated. I was feeling better and he seemed aware of it; he chuckled.

"No talk!" he advised, and left the room.

There was a drone of conversation. Grim and Narayan Singh were questioning a woman who was answering pertly, as if she were not in the least afraid of them but annoyed by their insistence. When I turned my head I could see she was Sidiki ben Mahommed's girl-wife, still smothered in yak-skin but with her coat unfastened, showing a smock and Mohammedan trousers underneath. Barring that her face was dirty she was beautiful—glittering dark-blue eyes and an impudent mouth—well-molded features; her plaited black hair in coils over her shoulders.

"Do you remember that you promised you would pay me money?" asked Sidiki, shaking my shoulder.

Narayan Singh jerked him away and came and stood beside me, followed by Chullunder Ghose, but Grim went on questioning the woman.

"Pay him nothing!" Chullunder Ghose advised. "We have discovered he is helpless anyhow!"

THEY helped me out of bed and I went to sit beside Grim with my back against an image of Chenresi carved on a stone wall; the image looked extraordinarily like Chullunder Ghose.

"This woman," said Grim—she was squatting exactly in front of me on a pile of sheepskins—"has lied in circles until she is telling the truth at last, from sheer exhaustion of imagination. First she said you carried her off. Then she said she was trying to overtake Sidiki to warn him that some one had fired the house. Next she said she herself set the house on fire because the other wives were jealous and treated her badly. Finally, she admitted it was she who tried to burn the place when Mordecai was there, and that it was she who tried to poison Mordecai. Now at last she admits she has a lover, but she won't name him; and she threatens that unless we let her go to her lover she will inform against us all, and particularly against Sidiki ben Mahommed who, it seems, is in the smuggling business—rifles, ammunition and tobacco."

"A man must live," Sidiki interposed. "How else shall one acquire a fortune in Ladakh? And now I have lost my fortune. She ought to be beaten to death!"

Grim went on talking:

"It's known, even in this monastery, that the Dugpas have caught Rait. Dugpa is the name for sorcerers who cultivate evil for the sake of evil—that's as close as I can come to understanding it. They're vaguely like the Kali-worshippers of India. The people Rait set out to reach, and who we want to reach, are the students of life, so to speak—much in the same way that Luther Burbank is a student of botany, for the love of it. The Dugpas are as much their enemies as the law of gravity is the enemy of the will to rise. Rait had intelligence

enough to work his way into the outer fringe of the Dugpa mysteries, but that was his limit. He began to try to use the Dalai Lama's letter that he stole from Mordecai. The Dalai Lama—or the *Kün-Dün* as they call him and the Tashi Lama of Shigatze, are the trusted outer representatives of the inner secret White Lodge, whose headquarters is said to be Sham-bha-la.

"It was like trying to illuminate a gas-tank with electric sparks. A policeman's badge flashed in a den of thieves as proof of good faith would have been child's play compared to that letter of Mordecai's.

"I had this from the abbot who runs this monastery. He's a gentle old philosopher, who told me what he knows about Rait in order to dissuade us from going forward. However, he admits that Benjamin's letter obliges him to help us on our way if we insist. Benjamin takes orders from the White Lodge, although he isn't a White and doesn't know much more about them than we do.

"Now here's the situation: The Dugpas pounced on Rait and tortured him—mentally; they'd know too much to make his information unreliable by torturing his body; a man will say anything with a hot iron on the sole of his foot. They specialize in subtle processes.

"Rait told them he had written to you to follow him. Maybe they knew that already. I don't know what their means of communication is, but it's swift, for we know how Tsang-Yang and Tsang-Mondrong were clapped on our trail. Their agents caught our two Tibetans in the shed in Sidiki's yard in Leh, and before they killed them learned from them that we had talked with Mordecai. Mordecai knew too much; therefore, so do we, and we're to be tempted to try to rescue Rait. They will either try to kill us up there in the mountains, or else confront us with Rait, discover what we know, if anything, and kill the lot of us together. Or—now get this:

"They're hypnotists. They're incredibly expert psychologists, and they're just as keen on getting control of the whole world as, for instance, the Bolshevists are. They believe in their black science as enthusiastically as the Bolshevists believe in communism—much more enthusiastically, that is, than most Christians believe in Christianity. And remember: Those men who have caught Rait are merely the small fry who take orders from the higher-ups behind the scenes.

"They may propose to catch us, and psychologize us, and make use of us in some way. The White Lodge accepts *chelas*. Christians make converts and put them to work. Everybody with a bug in his head tries to rope in everybody else—so why not Dugpas?

"There's war between them and the White Lodge all the time. Both sides practise secrecy to keep the other side from finding out their plans and methods.

"Now our friend Sidiki ben Mahommed is as different from Rait as chalk from cheese in some respects, but he resembles him in others. He has been trying to play both sides, simply for the love of the intrigue and for his own advantage. Rait was so inquisitive he would do anything to find out what he was after. Sidiki draws the line at too much danger, or too much hardship, and revolts from extremes, either good or evil, one way or the other."

"You forget my hospitality," Sidiki interrupted. "I have gone to great extremes in that respect, and at great danger to myself."

GRIM ignored the interruption.

"And Sidiki has this girl-wife, who is a red-hot fool. She has fallen in love with a Tibetan, who may be a low-rank Dugpa, whom she has hardly seen, but who has sent her messages by the mouth of an old woman who was allowed into Sidiki's house to charm warts. The old woman came frequently, and she is probably the Dugpa's mother. She promised this little fool that she should be a *Shape's** wife in Tibet if she did what she was told. That was why she tried to poison Mordecai, tried to burn her husband's house, and succeeded at the second attempt. The giant, whom Narayan Singh killed in the nick of time to prevent his killing you, was the lover's servant. They would probably have carried her off and sold the little fool in Baltistan or Tibet.

"And now Lhaten, the man who came to see us that night at Sidiki's invitation, Lhaten—so says the abbot of this monastery—is the *chela*, or disciple, of one of the initiates of the White Lodge. His real name isn't Lhaten; they never give their real names any more than the real insiders

* A very high official in Tibet.

ever reveal themselves to rank outsiders, like ourselves for instance. Lhaten is, so to speak, a connecting link between Sham-bha-la and the world outside, just as Benjamin is in a lesser degree."

"Lhaten," said Sidiki ben Mahommed, "is an extremely important personage. If I were not a better man than you describe me, he would not have condescended to visit my house. I have carried out his orders very often. It is all one to him whether one is Moslem, Hindu, Christian or any other religion; what he looks for is character, and when he finds it he acts as, for instance, he acted toward me."

"The point is," Grim went on, "that Lhaten looked us over, and if Lhaten decides to help us, we've a chance to get through—or so I'm told. But—you remember that big brute who came directly afterwards—the long-haired, handsome bruise who sat in the corner and wouldn't give his name—the man who knocked you half across the room when you took hold of him? He's a Dugpa. He's one of their insiders, and he knows as much about us as Lhaten does. Lhaten won't do any man an injury. That other will stop at nothing.

"Furthermore, you will gain nothing even if you reach Sham-bha-la, and you may lose your lives or your reason in the attempt," said Sidiki. "As for me, I must remain here in this crow's-nest monastery. If I should try to return to Leh they would murder me. Dugpas can't get into this place. But what a life! Oh, what a prospect!"

I went back and lay down on the only bed—the others had mattresses spread on the floor. From the bottom of my heart, I wished I had never heard of Rait. Grim seemed keener than ever on the expedition, but I suppose the after-effects of fever had left me weak of will as well as of body. I could see no good in it. Sham-bha-la might be heaven or hell for aught I cared. I did not wish to go to either place.

But it seemed that we had crossed our Rubicon when we buried Mordecai and set our teeth into the wind across the Zogi-la. We could not return to Leh without risk of being murdered. Once in Leh we were sure to be accused as criminals. Sidiki probably would turn against us, to protect himself against the charge of having helped us toward Tibet; and his girl-wife would betray him in the bargain!

It was too much like a nightmare to be interesting. It was cold enough and uncomfortable enough in that monastery cell, with the bitter smoke from tamarisk roots finding its way slowly through the open window to the zero air—there was actually frost in the far corner of the room—

To cross seventeen thousand-foot passes in midwinter to the gale-swept plateau of Tibet seemed to me, just then, less attractive than death.

I sat up, meaning to tell Grim we had already been mad enough for one lifetime and that the sanest thing we could do now would be to try to return to India and take our chances of arrest. I knew that if I voted to return the others would almost have to return with me; and I was even feeling mean enough to cite my knife-wounds—all comparatively superficial and all healing nicely—as a reason for retreat.

BUT as I opened my mouth to speak I thought of Rait again. I had a mental picture of him in a dungeon, going mad under torture vastly worse than physical, and being tricked into writing a letter to me in the belief that one of his torturers had taken pity on him. Rait had been my friend once—or I his, anyhow. I was the only man who had ever been his friend who would be likely to come to his rescue; and though the letter was a trap for me and whomever I might have with me, he probably did not realize that. The words I had meant to say were—

"Let's go back!"

What I actually said was:

"What's the use of arguing? Let's rescue Rait."

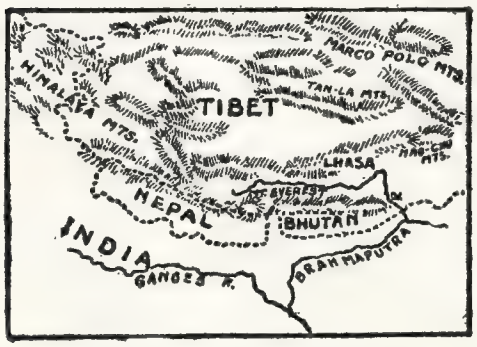
Grim seemed to think I was in delirium again; he took no notice. No thought about retreat had entered his head. He went on questioning the woman, and presently the old ivory-faced monk came in to change my bandages and smile and nod and treat me as if I were a child recovering from nothing much. He gave me filthy tasting stuff to drink, and laughed as he touched my chest of medicines that stood beside the bed with his toe, then went out again, spinning his prayer-wheel.

After that I slept, I don't know how long, and when I awoke Lhaten was in the room. There were no lamps. The atmosphere was thick with smoke because the window-shutter had been closed. They were sitting

with firelight on their faces from the red-hot embers on the hearth, but Sidiki and his wife were not there.

The firelight made Chullunder Ghose look more than ever like the image of Chenresi on the wall—fat, philosophical, benevolent. Grim's eyebrows twitched, which meant that his brain was alert. Narayan Singh squatted motionless, from the waist upward like a soldier on parade. Lhaten was talking, in a rather loud voice because of the wind that howled outside, but his voice was humorous and gentle like that of a man telling incredible fairy-tales to children.

"—No, the White Lodge is not at Shambha-la, but some of its brotherhood live there. The White Lodge never interferes



with individuals, as such, any more than nature may be said to interfere with individuals, as such. The greatest good of the greatest number always; and no favorites. Do the stars, for instance, limit their light to individuals? Yet one learns more about them than another. How? By trying; by concentration on the study. Do the stars come nearer? No. Do they treat him differently? No. Neither does the White Lodge make distinctions. It is secret, just as electricity was secret before Thales, Gilbert, Faraday and all the others following them discovered something about it. Electricity was there, always; but they had to find it. And having found it they could give it to the world, to use or misuse. Was electricity confined to any one place? No. Neither is the White Lodge confined to any one place. But some places are more suitable than others, just as there are certain places where it is more practical to establish electric plants. Climate has a lot to do with thinking."

"How has the White Lodge kept its secret all these years?" Grim asked.

"Who kept the secret of electricity?" Lhaten answered. "Was there any need to keep it, while men were too stupid, or too busily engaged in cutting one another's throats—which is the same thing—even to look for it? They were too superstitious to dare to investigate; afraid to be mocked or burned for heresy. Nowadays men know not much more, and they are as superstitious and as cocksure as ever. Nine tenths of them will mock you if you speak of the existence of the White Lodge; of the remaining tenth, some will try to put you in a lunatic asylum, some will curse you in the name of their religion and the remainder will try to believe you for various reasons, most of them selfish.

Selfishness prevents discovery of anything worth while. If you could look back at the history of invention you would find that no worthwhile discovery has ever been made by man or woman who worked solely for the profit there was in it. In every instance the greatness of the discovery has paralleled the degree of unselfishness of the discoverer. Selfishness makes people mentally blind. That is a scientific fact, which some day will be common knowledge."

GRIM asked a poser then:

"Can we four find our way in?"

Lhaten laughed.

"I am not your judge," he answered. "If you wish to turn back now, before it is too late, I can protect you as far as the place you started from."

Grim's voice shot the answer back at him abruptly—

"None of us wishes to turn back."

Narayan Singh echoed him—

"I will not turn back."

Chullunder Ghose sighed:

"I am afraid to turn back. I am afraid of my own opinion of myself, which is not good to begin with, and would be intolerable if any worse."

"Rammy, old top, how about you?" Grim asked, for the creaking bed had announced I was awake.

The one thought uppermost in my mind was that we must rescue Rait. I said so.

Lhaten answered—

"You will not succeed."

"We'll have a crack at it," said Grim.

There was silence after that for a long

time, except that we all coughed in the smoke. Lhaten was the next to speak:

"I will warn you," he said. "If you go forward, you can no more turn back than Galileo could, once he had made his discovery—or than Cæsar could, after he crossed the Rubicon. I speak of physical impossibilities—as, for instance, putting chickens back into the egg, or frogs back into tadpoles. The mere crossing of the mountains, difficult though that is, is the least of it. Let me try to explain. It is physical—absolutely physical, although not as you understand physics.

"Two of you are from the West and must have seen this often: A man creates a business—lives for it—loves it. That business is himself. Let us say that at fifty or sixty years of age he has a fortune and retires, intending to take life easy. How long is it, as a rule, before he dies? One year? Two years?

"But let us suppose that the same man undertakes a new activity in place of the old one. Instead of dying of the first disease that comes his way, he lives his life out to a full conclusion. Why? Because he has regained momentum. He is going forward. He had explored his business until there were no new corners for him; now he explores new realms, and as long as he continues to explore them he can live until his body wears out. But again, if he ceases, he dies—because nothing in nature is allowed to stand still.

"Now observe, because this applies to you; the man who has given up his business without having fully exhausted its possibilities for him, can return to it and so save himself. He has not yet grown out of the egg. But if he has exhausted all the possibilities for him of what he left, he can not return to it and live.

"It is for you to consider whether you will not now return to the world you have run away from. It may be you can live your lives out to their full conclusion. But if you decide to go forward, you have first to prove that you are fitted to discover what you seek; and there is no way to prove that except by doing it. Like men engaged in an experiment with unknown forces, you will be in constant danger.

"If, in spite of all the dangers, you should make your great discovery, you would then be like tadpoles that have evolved into frogs. You would have escaped the tadpole dangers, only to find frog-enemies from whom the White Lodge would have to protect you until you should learn how to protect yourselves. And now tell me this. Can you think of one man, who ever discovered anything worth while, who has not had to cope with mysterious obstructions placed in his path? Name any one you like—poet, musician, astronomer, chemist, philosopher—or consider yourselves. Have you ever accomplished anything without apparently intelligent obstruction meeting you at every turn?

"It is like going up-hill; there is a law of gravity against you. The desire to go up-hill—to discover something, that is—is the impulse of life, and there are they who continually study the laws that govern it. Those are the great ones whom you seek. The down-hill pull—the activity of ignorance, prejudice, passion, superstition—that is the law of death; and there are those who study that, who revel in it, who identify themselves with it. They are the enemy; and they are deadly dangerous.

"THERE are laws which govern all phenomena, and a man who discovers a law of electricity can not only produce effects with it, but also can make electricity available to others. Whoever discovers more recondite laws can produce effects with them and make their effects available to others. He may not be able to make others understand the law, but he can give others its benefit or impose on them the resultant evil—as in the case of electricity, for instance or in another instance, poison-gas.

"A man who would not know how to begin to make electric light can have its benefit, because of the mental labors of Faraday, Edison, Tesla and others. A man who would not know how to begin to make poison-gas can obtain it and use it against others, or suffer from it, because of the mental processes of those who have studied how to deal death.

"Now, practically all men who have made a great discovery have done so in the hope of benefiting all humanity. Perhaps the chemist who discovered poison-gas intended it to be used for beneficial purposes; and so it can be used. It is the misuse of a force that makes it evil, and it is possible to misuse any force whatever—the forces of steam,

electricity, chemistry, religion—and the prodigious force of thought.

"Therefore, they who study life, and who have discovered many of the secrets of the universe, oblige themselves to guard those secrets; because there are others who would use them to make mischief. They who study death are no less in communion with occult forces than are they who study life, and they are equally whole-hearted in their persistence—as you can readily understand if you remember how gravity opposes every effort to rise upward. Follow up that analogy and recall how great teachers have been attacked, vilified and, very often, murdered.

"If a man makes a great medical discovery, what happens? Do not the charlatans pounce on his discovery and use it for their own enrichment? Now do you begin to see why they, who are known by rumor only save to a very few who have seen and spoken with them, are obliged to live in secret and to hide their knowledge from the world? Could they dare to release their knowledge except to individuals whom they know and trust?

"And who are those whom they shall trust? Is it not obvious that they must be of a certain character? Morals depend on character, remember, and not character on morals. A man's religion makes no difference—none whatever. Can not two men belonging to different religions at one and the same moment discover a new comet or an unknown law of mathematics? To pursue evil a man must have evil tendencies, which will increase through cultivation as he becomes more and more responsive to the impulses that govern evil. Owls live in the dark. Whales swim in the sea. Men with scientific tendencies discover laws of nature. Only those who have the character pertaining to the path they choose can succeed in the end; and though a shoemaker, like Kabir, can become a poet, that is because he has the poet's nature. In the same way, only they who have the necessary character can find or be received into the White Lodge, although anybody can receive its benefits, as any one may read the poems of Kabir.

"And they who are the keepers of the secrets can read character as you can read a book."

Lhaten ceased and there was silence until Narayan Singh stirred the embers with a stick, selecting a few pieces of dry wood and putting them to burn carefully, so as not to increase the smoke.

"As for myself, I have slain many men," he remarked. "How is that as to character?"

"How many men did the Lord Buddha slay?" asked Lhaten.

"None," he answered.

"There you err," said Lhaten. "Did he not teach? Were there none slain simply because they approved his teachings and adopted them?"

"I SLEW with mine own hand," the Sikh said grimly.

"For gain? From fear? In passion?" Lhaten asked. "Nay, nay! Don't answer! I am not your judge. It is not I who must say yes or no."

"I know that. If you were he, I would fight you," said Narayan Singh.

Chullunder Ghose piped up, his voice peculiarly strained and squeaky, though it was normally a well placed baritone:

"Am personally peaceful, never having slain man or beast. Moreover, I have taught nothing that could cause men to be killed. I am Failed B. A., but I have more intelligence than the examiners who marked my papers. Might I not be a suitable jar, for the teachers to pour their wisdom into me, that I may pour it out again?"

"In driblets, at a profit?" Lhaten asked.

"But I must live," said the *babu*.

"Live then," Lhaten answered. "It is not I who will prevent. The wisdom can neither be bought nor sold, being like virtue which, if man or woman should sell it, could never have been virtue."

"Can a man know beforehand whether he can make the grade?" asked Grim.

"If not, how should he succeed?" asked Lhaten. "A man may know he can succeed, and yet fail; but unless he knows he can, he never will."

There was another long silence, broken only by the sound of coughing and the gusts of wind that rattled the wooden shutter. Then Grim asked a question that was uppermost in my mind—

"Who gives these their authority?"

Lhaten laughed.

"Who gave Galileo his authority to find out that the earth moves? The authorities forbade him, didn't they? They forced him to recant, and he was much too sensible to

make a martyr of himself and flatter his own vanity by being burned alive. He had let the truth out; and the same authority within himself that gave him leave to do that also warned him to protect himself by letting the fools believe they had suppressed truth. But truth, once out, can never be suppressed, although it can be imitated and misused.

"The proof of a man's authority is in its consequences. There is no authority from outside. All comes from within. But they are rare who recognize authority; and they are still more rare who have the courage to obey it. Some call it conscience, which is a lame word, having fallen from a high place."

Once more there was silence, but the wind outside howled like a host of furies, and somewhere in the monastery building bronze bells summoned monks to midnight ritual. Again Narayan Singh put dry wood on the embers and the flame leaped up, illumining Grim's face. Lhaten was in darkness.

"Who are these Mahatmas—men?" Grim asked.

"Very plain men," Lhaten answered. "Wisdom avoids vanity. Was Newton vain? Or Beethoven? Or Lao Tse?"

"Who taught them what they know?" Grim asked.

"Who taught the years to roll onward, or the earth to move around the sun? There are greater than they, whom they know from afar off, dimly, even as you have heard of them and seek them. The Mahatmas, to themselves, are ordinary men, too fallible, beset by their own perplexities. Our problems are very simple to them, because they mastered such elementary conditions as ours—in former lives; which is why they are called Masters. They have advanced to higher problems.

"Does a child at school not have to learn his alphabet, which to the one who can read has become part of his very nature—like ability to breathe? Next, does he not learn to read, which to him may be difficult, although foolishly easy to the older child who has advanced to foreign languages? Does he not have to learn arithmetic, by practise? Does that not lead on to algebra, and to calculus—each step requiring mastery by hard work consciously directed to the end in view? Are there not realms beyond realms to be mastered, each advance revealing new realms unimaginable to the student who has not yet reached them—so that he who knows the most is most aware of how illimitable knowledge is?

"It is so with life—with men. A newsboy lives in a world of short horizons and extremely sharply drawn convictions. But he gains by the experience. He rises and becomes a clerk. And is he not now in a new world? Is any contour of it quite the same, or are the old associations as important? Values have altered, or rather his sense of them. Good; let us say he has character; he goes on up until he manages a business. And at each new forward step do his horizons not increase? Imagine him, at last, the President of the United States. Could he return into the newsboy mold—or cease to have a sympathy for newsboys, or for clerks or managers or for all the men in circumstances he himself has battled with?

"It is the same with all life; everything is evolving into something else. What then becomes of men who have evolved above your plane and mine without as yet becoming more than men? They can understand us, having been as we are. Can we understand them? Could they associate with us, to our advantage or to theirs, any better than a President could live among the newsboys, or than Einstein, let us say, could live among race-course touts? Would any of you choose to live among the riffraff of the docks? Or, if you had the opportunity, would you refuse to influence that riffraff for their good, to the extent that they could understand you?

"Forgive me if I seem too frank, for I do not intend discourtesy. The difference between you and the riffraff of the brothels of Bombay is not greater than the difference between the Masters and yourselves. Should they then associate with you? And what good would it do?"

"What happens if a man should try to make that grade—and fails?" Grim asked him.

LHATEN seemed to hesitate, as if he were listening to the wind under the monastery eaves. Then:

"How are the ranks of master criminals recruited?" he asked. "What happens when a scientist goes wrong, or a philosopher, or any educated man? Is he not worse than the ignorant? Is he not more dangerous? So—whence do you suppose the ranks of Dugpas are recruited?

"The White Lodge will exclude, but it will never kill. Then what shall he do who has learned much, yet has erred because of evil in him and by his own lack of integrity excludes himself? Can he forget his knowledge? Envy, hatred and all malice enter into him and he becomes a leader of the enemies of light. He calls his darkness light and seeks to justify himself by deeds. He uses his intelligence to smother light, identifies himself with all negation and attracts to himself all those who by nature are unwilling to resist or who are too stupid to prevent him. That is the source of the legend of fallen angels."

"What finally becomes of them?" asked Grim.

Lhaten stared at the embers a while. Then, at last:

"What becomes of the fire that has eaten the wood?" he replied. "Fire is a bad master. Better to grow trees, though fire come and consume them. The very worst that fire can do is to release the elements of what it burns. Does any one of you wish your very spirit to revert into its elements? Serve evil if you do—become a Dugpa. It is first a little comfortable fire that warms the intellect; and some, by growing used to heat, endure it for a long time. Even rocks burn when the heat grows great enough. Better to grow trees and guard against the fire."

He left the room then silently, as if he had said too much, closing the door without making a sound; and for an hour, I dare say, we all stared into the embers while the wind howled like the baying of the dogs of death, from over the "Roof of the World" beyond which lay the deserts and the mystery of Tibet—until at last I fell asleep and dreamed about black devils torturing Rait in a dungeon underneath a mountain, where Grim and Narayan Singh had gone away and left me. It seemed to be my turn to be tortured next.

CHAPTER XIII

A DUGPA

THE following morning Grim gave me the news. Lhaten had come all the way from Leh to tell us that Sidiki ben Mahommed's two senior wives were safe and were being cared for by their relatives; his house and all his stores were burned to ashes but the cattle had been saved and none of his servants injured. There was hue and cry for Sidiki, and for ourselves, who were reported to be Tibetan bandits; and the discovery of dead bodies in the snow, a mile away from the burned house, had led the police to suppose that we bandits had quarreled among ourselves as to the possession of Sidiki's girl-wife. The fact that Sidiki had not been found dead had led to the presumption he was being held for ransom.

Sidiki's two senior wives had been questioned and had talked, of course. But they had told such a weird story about two white men in disguise, in company with two Indians and two Tibetans, accepting Sidiki's hospitality in order to be able to admit the other bandits in the night, that nobody believed a word they said and they themselves were actually under suspicion of having betrayed Sidiki to his enemies on the score of jealousy; it being notorious that the new young wife had had the household by the ears.

"The long and short of it is," said Grim, "that nobody believes we're white men and nobody feels inclined to send an expedition after us. The storms have covered our tracks, and between us and Leh the drifts have become pretty well impassable. So we're safe from pursuit. We can go forward. We can't go back.

"Sidiki and his wife will have to stay here until spring, when he proposes to make his way to Delhi and cash that draft on Benjamin you promised him. By that time we'll be in Tibet, or else dead, so it won't matter whether Sidiki talks or not. Lhaten has promised to get word to Benjamin about Mordecai's death; he's to be told we did our best for his son-in-law, which will leave the old man feeling that we haven't neglected our obligation to him.

"Lhaten seems to come and go as he pleases. I don't know how he does it, but there are probably lines of communication where snow won't lie because of wind or some such reason; and the whole of this country is dotted with hermits. You can't make me believe that a thousand hermits would all choose to live in limestone caves in winter-time just for the sake of being lonely. One man—ten men might; not a thousand. The story, of course, is they're meditating on the life to come. It's this life that amuses me; I'll bet they feel the

same about it. You know how a man can use his time up listening in on radio. And d'you remember how, when Younghusband reached Lhassa with his troops, they knew it in Bombay before the government had the news in Simla? Radio was a pipe-dream twenty years ago.

"Will you bet me that twenty years from now men can't dispense with radio and relay thought without the use of electricity? Will you bet me it isn't the hermits all over Asia who pass thought-waves along? Can you give me a better guess how information travels—true and false? We know it does travel. Did you ever talk with a hermit who hadn't all the latest news?"

A more important problem at the moment was for me to get in shape to travel. The knife-wounds and the pounding that the giant gave me had left me stiff and weak, although the wounds were healing in the mountain air with the aid of the old monk's nursing and mysterious drugs. He came in every hour or two with his prayer-wheel, and when he needed both hands to change the bandages he would give the wheel to Chullunder Ghose with orders to keep it spinning; it seemed to make no difference to him whose hand made the imprisoned paper charms revolve, provided their motion did not cease all the while he was in the room.

MEANWHILE Grim busied himself with monastery manuscripts. The library was underneath the building, in a cellar that was partly natural cave and partly hewn out of the rock. Some of the books were rolls, as much as fifty feet long; others were sheets of ancient paper tied between wooden blocks; there were enough of them to have kept a dozen translators busy for a life time, but there were not more than forty monks in the monastery, of whom not more than ten or twelve could read that ancient script. They not only did not object to Grim's exploring among their treasures, but actually carried up the books for him into the cell, and several times the abbot himself came in and helped him to translate them.

That abbot was a gently smiling ancient of days, as genial toward us as he was stern with all the monastery household. He was a little man; wrinkled and stooped, with a beard like a Chinaman's, and wore black robes much too big for him, so that he could fold them over and over against the draughts that made him shiver. He was hugely amused with Chullunder Ghose, from whom he endured outrageous banter with emotions that suggested an old maid being flattered by Don Juan; but if one of his monks looked sidewise at him, or as much as smiled at any of the *babu*'s jokes, he reproved him instantly and ordered Draconic penances—such as ten thousand repetitions of a long prayer on the monastery roof, where the wind blew through a leather overcoat like water through a sieve.

"You are a bad rascal—a bad rascal!" he assured the *babu*. "You will be reborn as a fish for having mocked the Lord Chenresi, whose outward shape you so resemble. There is no hair on a fish," he added, apropos apparently of nothing.

He called Grim his son—which gave Chullunder Ghose fresh opportunities for scandalous insinuations—and he spent hours trying to find in ancient books some proof that Jimgrim was a word of Pali origin with roots that could be traced into the very womb of dawn. Neither Grim nor any one else could guess whether he was in earnest or merely amusing himself; he seemed to be a mixture of the rankest superstition, almost absolute unworldliness and variegated knowledge. But there was no doubt whatever about his liking for Grim, or about his dislike for Narayan Singh.

He vowed he could smell blood on the Sikh, and invariably held his nose and looked away from him when he entered the room, keeping the Sikh on his left-hand side whenever possible. He seemed to like to sit at Grim's feet, making him take the carved square stool, that was carried wherever he went for him to squat on, and himself sitting down on the mat that was placed in front of it.

His mixture of frankness and reticence was not much different from that of any high dignitary of an established and historic church; he would discuss things one expected him to shy off from, and grow suddenly silent—even leave the room—when one of us asked him something that, to us, seemed commonplace. He did not in the least mind talking about Dugpas, although he spun his prayer-wheel while he did it; but when I asked him by whose authority Benjamin had been given the key to the secret route into Tibet he looked at me as

if I had slapped his face and went out, slamming the door and scolding the monk who waited on him. For two days after that he would not speak to me.

"Dugpas?" he said in answer to one of Grim's questions. "Spiritual criminals. Look out for them! Look out for them! I have some in this monastery.

"You say to a Dugpa 'Bless you,' and he tries to use the blessing for a stick to beat you with. You say to him 'This is so,' and his mind begins to work at once to prove it isn't so. You say to him 'Love your enemies,' and he goes to work to make some enemies, yourself first, in order to have some one to love. You show him money; he begins to think of how to imitate it out of baser metals. You make peace in your household; he proceeds to try to break it up. He thinks vice is virtue. He looks upon virtue as vice."

"Why not get rid of your Dugpas?" Grim suggested.

"How?" he asked and cackled with comical laughter, looking at Grim like an old grandparent amusing himself with a favorite grandson.

"Kick them out," Grim suggested.

"Kick out a bellyache! Why not? Cut off your nose because it bothers you to blow it—eh? As for me, I prefer to blow my nose. Did you ever try to sweep out darkness with a broom? It's easy. Only when you've finished, there's the darkness still there. There won't be any Dugpas in the monastery when I've got rid of all the Dugpa here." He touched himself over the heart.

"Do you mean you're a sorcerer yourself?" Grim asked.

THE old eyes twinkled and the wrinkled lips moved as if he were chewing something while he thought out a reply.

"Teach a child arithmetic," he said at last, "and he can use it to cheat with, can't he? Teach a man the laws and forces of the universe, and he can turn them against his teacher, can't he? Give a child a box of matches, and there will always be some one to show him how to set fire to a house. Teach me spiritual knowledge, and for every one desire to use it rightly, I shall have a thousand impulses to do the wrong thing. Persistence in thinking the wrong thing makes a man a fool if he is untaught, and a Dugpa if he knows too much. Do you think you know enough to be a Dugpa?"

Grim denied having any ambition in that direction. The old abbot chuckled at him.

"Nevertheless, my son, you are a mixture like any other man. The ingredients are in your mind—and as the mind learns, it controls you. The bad is just as much instructed as the good, so there is war in you between the two. Your bad side—I am trying to use terms that you will understand—will seek to use new knowledge on the side of evil; and as long as there is any evil in you, Dugpas will discover it, as flies find rotten meat. It will be a long time before there is no evil in you," he added dryly.

"But how do you account for Dugpas?" Grim asked him.

"How do you account for virtue?" the abbot retorted. "Do I not teach virtue, day in, day out, to a number of ingrate monks? And am I not one inconsiderable teacher among thousands? All over the world are there not superiors and their subordinates, of all sorts and kinds of creeds, who all teach virtue or try to teach it? Well, I tell you there are just as many who teach non-virtue and with just as much enthusiasm, though they call it something else. There are guides to virtue—guides also to non-virtue, and at each step upward that a man takes, he must choose all over again on which side of the ladder he will climb.

"For every light there are at once a million shadows, and nobody has to tell the shadow where to find the light; it is created by the light, and by the very virtue of the light it procreates non-virtue. Moreover, it would smother virtue if it could, just as the water, in which only fish can live, would smother men. Therefore, beware of the Dugpas, who are all they who say no to virtue, and who for every gleam of light invent its opposite. There are grades and grades of them—little, ignorant, unwise ones who are at the mercy of the others and commit crimes without knowing what or why—and wise, far-seeing ones who understand the laws of evil."

"Show me a Dugpa," said Grim. "You say, some of your monks are Dugpas."

"Aye, show us one," Narayan Singh echoed. "I will show you a good way to deal with him."

The abbot rang the copper bell he carried at his waist. The cell door opened and the

monk came in whose duty for the day it was to wait on him and to carry his stool and carpet. He was a very ordinary looking, plain-faced man with dull, uninterested eyes.

"There are degrees, and then again degrees of them," the abbot said, and made a gesture. The monk picked up his stool and mat and the abbot walked out of the room with his prayer-wheel twirling, followed by the other, rutching sandals in his wake.

"You have offended him," Chullunder Ghose remarked. "Such holy men as he don't like to be asked to betray even Dugpas."

But Narayan Singh took a long Tibetan sword out of a corner and tested its sharpness with his thumb, holding it then between feet and knees and beginning to file the edge.

"I think we will see a Dugpa," he said pleasantly.

THAT night, while we slept in our separate corners, with the shutter fastened and the embers dying dull red on the hearth, a sound like a footfall awoke me suddenly. For a while I lay still. The cell door had been left unfastened to admit the old monk who visited me at intervals to dose me and change my bandages and I supposed the intruder was he. But nobody came to my bedside, so I stared toward the hearth. There was some one sitting there, his face toward me and his back toward Narayan Singh; he appeared to be fanning the embers, and I still thought it was the old physician.

But suddenly the embers flared and a red blaze shone on the man's face. I felt the hair rise all over my body. He was the same long-haired and classically handsome man who had visited us in Sidiki's house and offered to protect us from Lhaten, that night our Tibetans were murdered.

He was sitting in exactly the same posture as he had sat then, with the same immobility, the same half-contemptuous expression on his face. He seemed to be waiting for us to speak to him, but none spoke—though I could hear Chullunder Ghose's teeth chattering. There was no sound from Narayan Singh or Grim. I did not know they were awake.

The man sat without moving until the blaze died down again and his face receded into shadow. Then a voice, that was his, but that hardly seemed to come from him, spoke very clearly, in an accent of command:

"You are in danger. You must leave this place. You may wait for the dawn, but no longer."

"Whose orders?" I asked.

I sat up on the bed. Chullunder Ghose was clutching at his blankets and his teeth were going like castanets, but there was still no sound from Narayan Singh or Grim. The embers were dying and dying, but I could see the man's eyes.

"The orders of them who will guide you to where you shall go," he replied.

He spoke English, but that did not strike me as peculiar at the time.

"What is the danger?" I asked him.

In the dim glow from the embers he had become hardly visible, but he stood up. I could see that. His anger was almost tangible.

"Disobedience is death!" he answered.

Suddenly there came the swish of steel in air, and a thwack as a sword struck home into the man's neck from behind. He fell forward with a groan on to the embers. Some one pulled him off them, struck a match, lighted our lantern, and I saw Grim leaning over him. Behind the hearth Narayan Singh stood with the sharp sword in his hand.

"So I deal with Dugpas!" said Narayan Singh, and Grim looked up.

"Take a dekko at him," he exclaimed.

He held the lantern so that all of us could see the man who lay there with his neck three-quarters severed. He was clean-shaven. He did not bear the least resemblance to the bearded man who had come and spoken with us in Sidiki's house. He was the monk who had attended on the abbot that day, carrying his stool and mat—snub-nosed, dull-eyed and unintelligent!

CHAPTER XIV

LHATEN'S GURU

IT WAS bitterly cold in the room. Grim pulled on his overcoat and went to the door to summon some one who would tell the abbot what had happened; but as he opened the door the abbot entered, hurrying, with a monk behind him. Chullunder Ghose threw himself face-downward on his

mattress and pulled up the blankets, trying to pretend he was still asleep.

Grim held the lantern in mid-room, its light on the old abbot's wrinkled face, the corpse in shadow.

"What brought you?" he asked.

"Who slew?" asked the abbot, in the harsh voice that he used to discipline his monks.

Narayan Singh, wiping the sword on the dead man's clothing, grunted:

"I slew a Dugpa. Did I not say I would show you how to deal with one?"

"Man of blood! Man of blood!" said the abbot. "You befoul my monastery. Go now! All of you must go."

He glanced toward me.

"Can you travel?" he asked.

I would have died outside in the snow rather than remain there after being asked to leave the place. I made him such answer, as politely as I could. Grim started to ask questions; the old fellow silenced him with an angry exclamation and a gesture.

"Maniac!" he spluttered at Narayan Singh.

The Sikh stood erect like a man on parade, his eyes glowing in the lamplight.

"You know well I slew a Dugpa," he retorted.

"Incorrigible butcher! You shall be reborn into a boar! Men and the dogs and the other boars shall hunt you! Slew a Dugpa? You have cracked a jar and let the water out!"

"He changed himself into a man with a beard," said the Sikh. "These eyes beheld him."

"Fool!" exclaimed the abbot. "Can a tree not cast a shadow on a wall? Can even you not see your image in a pool? Shall not an arch-Dugpa then use this poor weakling to reflect his image?*

The old man's anger made him stutter. He raised his staff and struck Chullunder Ghose to force him to get up from the mattress.

"Go!" he ordered. "All of you shall have my blessing, save the one who slew. If that one should stay here he would make a shambles of the place— He lets in death— He is in league with death— He—"

"Nay, nay, holy one, no curses!" said Narayan Singh. "If I have done wrong I am already cursed enough."

"Slayer, if I bless you, you will slay more!" said the Abbot.

"If you curse me, will I slay less?" asked the Sikh.

"Die then by the sword," the abbot answered, "for I see you are an honest man. You will serve some though you injure others. You shall eat your own sin and be done with it."

Narayan Singh bowed proudly to him, suggesting rather tolerance than too much faith in the old abbot's vision.

"Jimgrim, my son," said the abbot, "I could have taught you much—but not these. You are a better one than any of my monks; yet you come with a crew of brawlers and my monastery is in danger through them. This one"—he pointed at me—"shall have medicines lest he die by the way. Such virtue as he has is in his friendship. He may win through on that account. I doubt it. That one"—he made a gesture with his staff in the direction of Chullunder Ghose—"is a coward whose curiosity is greater than his cowardice; whose honesty is stronger than his zeal. His cunning shall protect him, though his flesh shall be a weariness." He pointed at Narayan Singh. "Death is no answer to riddles," he said, "as you shall know when you are slain, you who have slain so many."

He turned to go, giving his staff to the monk who attended him and beginning to spin his prayer-wheel, but I broke the silence by asking him what was to be done about Sidiki ben Mahommed and his young wife. He turned in the doorway answering impatiently:

"What are they to you?"

"I owe the man money," I told him.

"Then pay it," he retorted irritably. "So much talk about such unimportant things!"

Presently monks came into our cell to carry out the dead one. Others waited for us to pack up our belongings. Nothing was left undone to make it obvious that our welcome had expired, although no actual discourtesy was offered.

Evidently some one told Sidiki we were leaving, for he came in a great state of excitement carrying paper, pen and ink-horn.

*According to some authorities this process accounts for a large percentage of the idiots immured in lunatic asylums. It is said that, through vicious habits and in various other ways, they render themselves unable to resist the imposition of other wills on theirs—even of a number of other wills at one time. If true, this would account for the sudden criminal outbursts of otherwise apparently sane people. Whether true or not, there are millions of people who believe—and there is plenty of circumstantial evidence—that experts in malignant hypnotism and thought-transmission can project their own personal appearance as well as superimpose their will on another. C/f the Bible, H. P. Blavatsky, Eliphas Levy, and scores of other writers on the subject.

"You go sahibs? You go? And at this hour? You were not—you were not forgetting—?"

I WROTE him his order on Benjamin, attaching no conditions to it, knowing that if there were any peculiar wording about the order or anything that might arouse Benjamin's suspicions, the old Jew would refuse to honor it. Grim, Narayan Singh and Chullunder Ghose all added their signatures as witnesses, and before we left the place I persuaded the old abbot to attach his seal.

Sidiki wept at our departure. He pretended he would like to come with us and swore he would have done so but for having a young wife on his hands.

"Nor can I leave her, sahibs. You don't know this country. They would make a cuckold of me before my back was turned. There is something in me of Lord Roberts—I would oh, so dearly love this campaign into the unknown—yes, yes, I would love it. But my honor—a man's honor is his first consideration. I must wait here until spring, when these monks will kindly escort me as far as Leh, where I will appeal for government protection and proceed to Delhi. Is your honor sure this money will be paid to me by Benjamin?"

In darkness, for it lacked two hours of dawn, we watched our loads being carried out, and then Narayan Singh and the *babu* being lowered in a great basket between natural rock bastions, and heard the basket —wind-blown—crash against the rock-wall in fathomless darkness. My turn and Grim's came last, and, knowing something about pit-head gears, I sat near the rickety wooden winch, manipulated by two monks, and examined the rope made of leather and various odds and ends. It occurred to me to ask whether there was no other way of leaving the place.

I was told that the steps hewn in the rock could not be used in winter because of ice that spoiled the foot and finger hold; but the old abbot did his best to reassure me about the two-monk-power elevator, pointing to a prayer-wheel, yoked by a leather belt in such way that a thousand prayers were repeated automatically at each revolution of the winch.

"So you are quite safe," he assured me. "They who raise and lower the cage have orders that if the rope should break they must continue turning. Thus blessing would accompany the dissolution. There would be no curse in such a death."

He grieved sincerely at our going, but assured Grim that after one of us had shed blood he had neither authority nor will to offer us another minute's hospitality.

"Bloodshed within!" he exclaimed. "Who then shall protect us from the bloodshed from without?"

Grim offered no apology; it would have been lame and useless; probably it would have shut off speech, whereas there was something about the old abbot's attitude and the way he champed his jaws that suggested he had something he would still say if we let him. A mere regular ritual blessing might set his own conscience at ease as having done what duty indicated, but a few more words of explanation of the Dugpa mystery would be a much more acceptable parting gift from our bewildered point of view. And they came, as we waited in silence while the two monks wound up the cage on its complaining wooden roller.

"Since Dugpas wished to get you out of here, where you were safe, how else should they expel you than by causing you to expel yourselves by violence? When fools make war they expend their resources; squandering money and life and food until the victor loses with the vanquished and another, who is wiser, overwhelms them both.

"No Dugpa would do such foolishness. He sacrifices little Dugpas, even as the governments send soldiers to be slain, because there are always plenty who will fill the lower ranks. But one little sleepy, stupid, belly-loving Dugpa is as useful to him as an army that a government flatters and sends to its death; because he wages war by causing his enemy to make mistakes, and he wins not by what he himself does, but through the self-destroying acts of whomsoever he would conquer."

"Do you mean to say," Grim asked him, "that the Dugpas actually calculated that Narayan Singh would kill that monk of yours?"

The bitter wind was whistling and moaning and the winch squeaked like an animal in pain. Flickering lamplight filled the low-roofed open shed in which we waited, but beneath us the rope vanished into blackness and there were not even shadows to

show where a dozen monks stood watching, hardly two arms' length away from us. The old abbot thought a while, and chewed the cud of his reflection, spitting at last before he spoke:

"The wind blows. Where there is a window open, or a keyhole or a cranny or a crack, does the wind not find its way? Thought is much thinner than wind. That Sikh is predisposed to shedding blood, and he who sheds blood may not stay in this place. There is a force that makes men shed blood—even as the wind makes windmills turn. He who is not on guard against the Dugpas will obey the forces they direct."

Grim answered with one of his comical smiles which mean he is mocking himself as much as any one:

"Magic would make a wonderful excuse for a criminal on trial! Unfortunately, in the West we don't believe in it."

"Of course not," said the abbot gently. "In the East we are older, we know more. We know what threw the whole world into war. And if the Dugpas wish to rule you, what is plainer than that they will first of all make you believe there are no such things as Dugpas? Does a man who will break in and steal first announce what he will do, and how he will do it, and when? Do your criminals in the West not make you all believe they are honest citizens? Be on guard against Dugpas, my son!"

Then the basket came up through the hole and he blessed us while we stepped into the swaying thing. The last we saw of him was his old wrinkled ivory face framed in yellow lamplight and black shadow, as he clung to a beam and peered down watching our descent. After that, we were both of us busy with poles for a long time, fending off the basket from the cliff side as the two monks lowered us—we never knew how many hundreds of feet—to the platform of rock at the head of a track that descended along the lip of a snow-hung precipice into the valley.

IN A cavern thick with dung, whose opening was sheltered from the wind by a clump of tamarisks that had rooted themselves in fissures in the platform, all our ponies waited—fat and villainously quarrelsome from lack of work. There was only one lantern, and but two monks there to help us lift the loads on while the ponies kicked their heels up at the cavern roof, bit, squealed and broke loose to hide in dark corners.

So it was dawn, for all our haste, before we took the trail at last and rode, with one leg over the edge of a precipice and the other being skinned against the cliff, down a declivity that seemed to lead into the bowels of the earth. Above us there were gilded peaks that shone like lightning, so that we could hardly bear to glance at them with the icy wind making our eyes run. Beneath us was a gruesome black hole, colder as the track descended, full of alternating silences and sounds of savage cataclysm as the wind broke great icicles away and sent them splintering on unseen rocks.

Unguided, we could not have found our way among those gorges for a single hour. More often than not there was no track to be seen at all, until we actually found it under us, with the ponies picking their way like cats where one false footstep would have meant destruction. It was a goat-trail, cunningly marked and helped out here and there by pick and shovel, along the line of the prevailing wind, where snow could never lie deep, even in the storms.

The monk who led us, wrapped to the ears in yak-skin, riding an ancient mule, kept singing to himself a tune that sounded older than the hills, the same few bars of a simple melody ever and ever repeated, reaching us in fragments between gusts of wind. It suggested a pagan hymn to nature, but Grim said the words were all about beer and pretty ladies. He never glanced back at us once to make sure we were following, and when the ponies rose like moving steps above us and we caught sight of him turning around some pinnacle of rock sharp-cut against the sky, he seemed to be leaving the whole business of leading to his old mule, that seemed to know the way as intimately as if he carried a man along it every day of his existence.

The last half of that day's march was nightmare, in which I clung to the saddle desperately, growing weaker at every leap the pony made and trying not to let Grim know how ill I felt. One wound reopened and I felt the blood ooze; and though I took the medicines the abbot gave me, and drank brandy now and then from Grim's flask when there was room for two of us to halt together on the track, the cold began to

creep into my wounds and fill me with the thought how comfortable death would be.

I only contrived to finish the day's march by remembering Mordecai and his retreat over the passes, alone, sick, starving, hunted. I did not propose that Mordecai should play the man, and I lie down under less than half his difficulties. And in a sort of half-delirium I clung on during the last hour of a scampering, struggling climb, imagining I actually was the battered Jew escaping from Tibetan enemies in devil-masks.

The noise of Grim's clambering pony behind me became galloping monks. The volleys of echoes as stones went rattling off the ledge over the precipice were rifle-shots. It seemed to me that I was making for a wayside inn, which queerly enough, contained white-shirted waiters and a jazz-band, where the *nemo*—who was Benjamin's fat daughter, spreading food on a yellow table-cloth under an ancient temple lamp—would presently be beaten to make her tell my name and hiding place.

I think I was unconscious when at last I rolled into a man's arms and was carried somehow into a cave, whose entrance had been masked against the wind by a barrier of limestone blocks and mud.

I remember distinctly that I thought I was going to die and the prospect was not unattractive. That cave had the feel of a sepulchre, although it was warmed by a good fire of tamarisk branches. The voices of my friends appeared to reach me faintly from a mile away, as if I had already passed into the borderland of death, and I was not even vaguely interested in what they were talking about. I no longer felt cold, and though they laid me near the fire, I did not feel the heat. There seemed to be a vast, dark wilderness in front of me, which I must traverse presently toward a dim light in the distance, and anything that took my mind off that was an annoyance.

I don't know how long I lay in that condition, but at last I began to rebel against something—I did not know what—that was pulling me back in the direction of my friends. I tried to summon all my will-power to resist the interference—even tried to cry out to my friends to help me shake the interference off. I think it was my own voice that I heard first. Then Grim's:

"Rammy, old top, wake up, confound you! You've got no right to die here. It's a rotten breach of hospitality. Save up your dying for later on when it won't be so infernally inconvenient!"

I was conscious of being shaken violently, and of feeling indignant. It occurred to me as indecent to disturb a dying man, but I did not associate the shaking with Grim's hands that had me by the shoulders. Then I heard a strange voice, speaking Telugu:

"Any fool can die. The thing is to know when to die."

Strange though the statement looks on a written page, it was that argument that made me cease resistance to the force that appeared to be pulling me back into the world. I saw it as unfair to Grim to leave him and began to wish myself alive again and strong enough to help him in some undertaking—although what the undertaking might be I could neither remember nor imagine. Soon after that I tasted brandy in my mouth, and then there was another lapse into unconsciousness.

I awoke in utter darkness, but rolled over on a heap of blankets and saw that our loads had been set up like a wall between me and a fire in the midst of the cave. Narayan Singh heard me move and, pulling a couple of loads aside to make a passage, brought me water in a clay pitcher. Some one threw fresh wood on the fire, and by the light of the blaze of sparks I saw Grim and Chullunder Ghose sitting side by side, staring at two other men whose faces were in shadow.

"There is a greatness," Narayan Singh said in his gruffest voice, putting his arms under my shoulders. "Will your honor try it? This is something manlier than death in the dark."

He hove me to my feet, half-smothered me in my blankets and helped me to a place beside the fire, near Grim, where he heaped loads for me to lean against. Grim merely glanced at me; his whole attention was fixed on the two who sat facing him, of whom one surely was the owner of the cave, a hermit at the first glance.

He was muscular, hairy, unwashed, clad in goat-skins and rags, with a beard that came down to his navel and a yard of bronze hair matted up with grease. Lice crawled through the dense hair on his arms. His feet were bare, and he had lost three toes, apparently from frost-bite. He appeared to like the lice; he did not scratch himself. His eyes were insolently daring—red-rimmed from the bitter wood smoke. His

age was anything from fifty or sixty onward. He appeared well fed and active, but was sitting stock-still, scarcely seeming to breathe and not moving so much as an eyelash.

THE other seemed quite out of place in the cave. He was tall and dressed handsomely in an embroidered smock, a turban of dark purple silk and an almost gorgeous quilted coat whose color was indeterminable, though it looked rich in the gloom. His feet were bare, but there were long boots on the floor of the cave beside him, and he had laid aside a heavy yak-skin overcoat that appeared to have jewelled clasps—at any rate, the firelight shone on what looked like jewels where the fastenings should have been.

He resembled no Tibetan I had ever seen, looking more like a Rajput, though his beard was neither curled nor parted in the middle. He had almost classically perfect features, with a broad, smooth forehead and eyes, of a dark blue sky-color that would have attracted attention anywhere instantly, and would have held it as long as he pleased.

There were other noticeable things about him: On the middle finger of his right hand was a gold ring that covered the whole joint; it was carved with symbols and resembled the one that Lhaten wore. He had a necklace of small gold beads that descended inside his smock. Around his waist there was a tasseled cord of several colors interwoven.

Apart from his eyes and his dress the most remarkable thing about him was his cleanliness, which was all the more apparent since he sat so close to the abominably dirty hermit. He sat bolt upright on a clean mat, which he presumably had brought with him, but gave the impression, none the less, of being comfortable and entirely at his ease; and he appeared to have the gift, peculiar to men of wide experience and seasoned character, of making strangers feel at ease as well.

He smiled as his eyes met mine. It was a smile remarkably like Grim's, in that it had no faintest trace of sneer and made you like him, though you felt that he was seeing through you.

"If you had been less muscular," he said, "you might have been less difficult to drag back from that long sleep you were contemplating. However, I won the tug of war. Do you forgive me?"

"No," I said.

His eyes laughed but Chullunder Ghose, in panic, hurled rebuke at me.

"Such graceless speech! Oh Rammy sahib, this *babu* eats shame! 'Blow, blow, thou winter wind. Thou art not so unkind as man's ingratitude!' "

I felt too weak to argue but my mind was clear. When a man asks my forgiveness I suspect him of intentions on my peace or pocketbook. Forgiveness is stark impertinence; no man has any right to insult another with impudent suggestions of superiority. None with any manhood in him wants to die before his time, and if it was true that this man had pulled me back to life, why should he apologize?

"I see we think alike on that point," said the stranger. "I am glad I came."

"Who are you?" I asked, wondering how he had read my thoughts.

"If you wish, you may call me Rao Singh."

Grim leaned toward me and whispered, his lips hardly moving—

"Lhaten's *guru!*"*

AS HE spoke, a man's shape seemed to condense out of the darkness. Lhaten, seated on a mat behind Rao Singh, moved and the shadows reswallowed him.

"You will be well enough in a few days to continue your journey," said Rao Singh. "What is your purpose?"

"To rescue Rait," I answered.

"Rait made his own bed. Shall he not lie in it?" he asked.

"Did you help me?" I retorted, "or didn't you?"

"I have helped you in a very little matter," he said calmly. "You were merely permitting yourself to die of wounds before your time. If you had done what Rait did, I could no more have helped you than I could delay the coming of the night."

When a man is just beginning to recover from the jaws of death his horizon, in the concrete sense, may be extremely limited; but what he does see, he sees definitely. I had made up my mind to rescue Rait, so it was no use arguing the point.

"We've burned our bridges," Grim remarked.

*Guru—teacher.

"That is true," said Rao Singh. "But how do you know it? Does it not appear to you that others burned them for you?"

Chullunder Ghose piped up, in the tone of voice that a shop clerk uses to a rich American, suggesting all the implications of envy, cupidity, artfulness and will to have the better of a bargain.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "And now Sri Rao Singh Bahadur will unfold to us a mystery!"

"I will not," Rao Singh retorted.

For a while we sat still, and I remember I studied our visitor's eyes, whose blue was like nothing I had ever seen before, except perhaps lake water in the hills in spring. They were incongruous. If he had been a Scandinavian they would none the less have excited comment.

"You are something like young birds who peck at the shell of the egg from within," he remarked after several minutes' silence. "For you to say what you will do when you emerge is to talk of what you don't know and can't possibly understand. Remember this: There is a time, after birds have emerged from the egg, when they have to be cared for and fed and protected. Later they are taught to fly. Then they neither return to the nest nor do they act any longer as fledglings."

He looked frankly and long at Narayan Singh, our Sikh returning the stare, lips parted, as if he were having his fortune told.

"Eggs opened with the knife don't hatch," he said at last.

The Sikh did not wince. His answering voice rang manfully—

"Can I undo what I have done?"

"Not in this life."

"Shall an old horse learn new paces?"

"He who takes the sword—and weakens—might as well slay himself and have done with it," said Rao Singh. "There is no merit in sheathing the sword from fear of consequences, nor any victory worth winning by that means. The thing is to be whole-hearted. There is virtue in whole-heartedness. A sword is a merciful thing as compared to a slandering tongue."

"And me?" Chullunder Ghose asked—meekly, but with excitement that made his brown eyes glitter.

Rao Singh looked at him for at least a minute without blinking, until the *babu* had to let his breath out with a noisy gasp.

"A stream," said Rao Singh, "that seems to have no goal but trickles here and there will reach the ocean finally."

"SRI RAO SINGH BAHADUR, think again!" said the *babu* hoarsely. "Truly I have wandered here and there. What am I but a *babu*—failed B. A.? Should I have sat down and have said 'yes, sahib, yes, sahib' to every alien Jack-in-office who could order me, because he had a white skin, without knowing the thousandth part of what I know? Should I have said 'yes, sahib' to the hypocrites and 'yes, sahib' to the fools and 'yes, sahib' to the men who grow rich while I am supposed to be grateful to them for the right to swallow the dust they make? Do you do that? Do you say 'yes, indeed, brother' to the hypocrites who cry that all's well because their pockets are well filled? Would you have me fool myself into stagnation until I rot like all the rest of them?

"I have brains, have I not? A belly, haven't I? Eyes? Ears? Wife and children? Do I feel less—do I deceive myself more—than the men who expect me to blink at their stupidities and say 'salaam' to them? Sri Rao Singh Bahadur, have I ever had one chance until I seized this one and tricked these two sahibs into taking me along with them? Tricked them—but was it a trick? And how much of a trick? Did I deceive them? They who know me for an honest scoundrel, who have never cheated any man who treated me as they have treated me. That Sikh—he would die for any one he loves. Me—I would live, that I may enjoy my friends! Death, sahib, comes to us all too frequently! And is it my fault that the world is no oyster for a failed B. A. with a brown skin and no capacity to be a hypocrite?"

"It is the fault of your karma*," said Rao Singh. "You have merit."

"What is merit to me, if I have no hope?" the *babu* answered. "Sri Rao Singh Bahadur, I despise a merit that is useless!"

"Put it to a use then."

"Will you help us?" Grim asked suddenly.

There was another pause while Rao Singh looked steadily at Grim's eyes.

"Better to be a dupe," he said at last, "than to put to a test him on whose help you rely. If I should say I will help you,

*The Law of Cause and Effect, which provides exact reward and retribution.

then you might say afterwards that I have not helped, because you know nothing about the methods I would use. The surgeon's knife helps, but the victim cries out bitterly. And if I should say I would help you, would you not try to take advantage of the promise? That is human nature. You would certainly rely on me instead of using all your own ability—whereas it is only when you have put forth absolutely all your own ability, that I can help you in the least."

Grim seemed to have at least an inkling who this extraordinary individual was, but I only knew he was Lhaten's *guru*, which was shallow information. India is full of *gurus* who amount to nothing—teachers of penny philosophy based on superstition, and tradition learned at second hand from mistranslated text-books. True, he spoke English perfectly, and without any of the phrases that the ordinary *gurus* use to veil their ignorance. He did not show off. He was neither arrogant nor too persuasive. Still—

"Will you help us to rescue Rait?" I asked.

"No," he said, and that blunt answer did more to convince me he was somebody than if he had spent hours explaining to me who he was and why I should show him respect.

"Do you know where Rait is?" I demanded; but he did not answer that question.

"Listen," I said. "Rait writes he is in a dungeon undergoing torture. If it is true you came to keep me from dying of knife-wounds, why can't you at least help me to rescue that poor fellow from much worse than physical torture?"

"Are you sure Rait wrote?" he asked.

"I have his letter."

I was wrong. Grim had both Rait's letters. He produced them, holding them toward the firelight.

"Why not burn them?" Rao Singh suggested.

AGAIN there was at least a minute's silence. The old hermit, who seemed to read silence as other men understand speech, leaned forward and put fuel on the fire. Grim folded the letters, in doubt what to do with them.

"Why burn them?" I asked.

Rao Singh, without moving his head, contrived in some way to summon Lhaten from the gloom behind him.

"Tell why," he ordered.

"Because he has suggested that you should," said Lhaten. "Also because evil communications are a link that Dugpas use too easily. As disease seeks dirt, malevolence—"

"You have already told too much," said Rao Singh, and Lhaten retired to the gloom where he became invisible.

"If I burn them—" Grim began.

"You will do so on your own responsibility. I make no bargains," Rao Singh interrupted.

Chullunder Ghose began to plead with Grim to burn them, throwing a handkerchief from hand to hand—a way he had when he was more than usually nervous.

"Sahib, you don't know what great things hinge on little ones sometimes! A little flea from a rat's tail carries plague. The color of—"

He ceased because he saw Grim was not listening. In his own mind, in his own way, Grim was working out the problem for himself. He glanced at me at last. I nodded, always choosing to agree with him and back him to the finish when he works his eyebrows that way. I have known him to decide wrongly—possibly more times than I could count offhand; but half the fun of life, to my mind, lies in going the whole distance when you give a man your confidence. Mistakes don't matter; it is arguing about them that rots friendship.

Grim burned the letters, poking them into the fire with a stick.

"Why did you do it?" Rao Singh asked.

"They were of no use, and I want to see what will happen next," Grim answered. "Ramsden and I are determined to rescue Rait. Those two letters can't make any difference."

"No?"

Rao Singh stood up and Lhaten held his cloak for him to find his way into the sleeves. Then he turned his back to us and Lhaten buttoned it, but that may have been a move to mask an exchange of whispers.

Grim and the others, the hermit included, all rose to their feet, but I had to sit still, being too weak to rise without help. Rao Singh came and looked at me, smiling, and I noticed that his clothing smelt of sandalwood. His hands and face were as clean as if he had come that minute from the bath.

"You all but escaped out of that prison of yours," he said in his rolling bass voice.

"Obstinate? I never knew a man so obstinate! Until I learned how strong your friendship is for Jimgrim I was at a loss how to challenge your will."

"Why did you go to the trouble?" I asked.

"Lhaten summoned me—accepting the responsibility," he added, glancing at his *chela*.

"If there is anything I can do," I said, "at any time to—"

He interrupted with a gesture of fierce distaste. Then suddenly he laughed, as if remembering I could not understand his point of view.

"You have established claim on me enough," he said. "A gift might increase it altogether too much. You will not need me again, I think. Stay here until your strength returns."

Then he went, with a wave of his hand to the hermit, who behaved like some old janitor in attendance on a god's ambassador, dividing his emotions equally between scorn for us and pride at having sheltered such a visitor.

With his back toward the entrance, the hermit spoke at last in Hindi—

"What have any of you done that you should have this honor?"

CHAPTER XV

FOUR SAVAGES

I DON'T pretend to know what method had been used to snatch me out of death's gate. Grim's version of it was that Lhaten came unexpectedly, and after he had pulled all my bandages off and examined the wounds, Rao Singh came unannounced.

Rao Singh, after hardly a glance at me, had asked to have the loads piled so as to make a sort of inner chamber; and behind that barrier he and Lhaten worked over me for half an hour; but in what way they had worked, none knew.

I do know that from that hour my recovery began, and it was rapid. There was a new sensation of vitality—the sort of feeling that a man has on an early summer morning after a good night's sleep. Nothing—not even pain and stiffness—could convince me that I was in the slightest danger of relapse, and my friends had hard work to keep me from taking too much exercise, until Narayan Singh at last pronounced an ultimatum.

"Sahib," he said, "when we wrestled at Benjamin's you had the best of it. By the five vows of a Sikh and on my honor, I will take my vengeance now unless you lie still!"

And now it appeared that the secret route into Tibet was not entirely free from toll, although the lousy old hermit refused even to look at money or to help himself from our provisions. Day after day I was left alone with him while my friends, armed with hatchets, took the ponies down into a near-by valley to cut tamarisk for fire-wood, which they brought into a cave near-by for the hermit's future use. That seemed to be the customary task imposed on all rare visitors who used the secret trail, and in return we were entitled to be guided as far as the next, else undiscoverable, halting place. There was no fixed minimum of fuel to be cut, nor any limit to the quantity, so my companions filled the storage cave, the hermit neither thanking them nor appearing to take the slightest interest.

He himself lived on infinitesimal rations of barley, which he roasted on an old iron shovel and ate cold, counting it grain by grain. He appeared disgusted at our appetites, and at his rate of consumption he had enough barley stored in two sacks to last him an immeasurable time. But he had none to spare for our ponies, nor would he tell us where we might obtain any. In fact, he would tell us nothing, except that he was ready to act as guide whenever we should choose to move on; his conversation being limited to that, and to assertions that Tibetan lamas were a lot of frauds. He appeared to believe we were going to Lhassa, and to regard us as a pack of fools for that sufficient reason.

During the ten days that we occupied his cave, I never saw him pray or do anything that suggested a religious exercise. He would sit by the hour on a rock, well sheltered from the wind outside the entrance of the cave, his red-rimmed eyes fixed on the sky-line and an expression on his face as if he were listening to sounds that none of us could hear. He appeared to have no regular hours for "listening in"—if that is what he did. Sometimes he got up from his litter of dry moss and branches in the middle of the night, when a gale was raging, and sat on his rock until dawn. At other times, when he was cooking barley

or carrying fire-wood from the storage cave, he would suddenly drop what he was doing, as if he had heard a signal, and would hurry to the rock and sit there motionless, perhaps for a few minutes, or for hours.

Yet his hearing was not particularly keen. If anything, he seemed inclined to deafness, due to the terrific pressure of the wind and perhaps, too, to accumulations in his ears of wax and extraneous filth.

And it did not seem to make the slightest difference to him how much noise we made when he was concentrating on his strange task. We could sit around the rock, laughing and talking within two yards of him, without disturbing him in the least.

WE WERE in haste to be off because the grain for the ponies was running short, so we left before I had fully recovered, starting one morning as soon as daylight had crept midway down into the valley over which the ledge in front of the cave-mouth hung like an eagle's eerie. The old hermit stowed a dozen grains of barley in his cheek and led the way on foot without a word of comment, setting such a pace as gave the loaded ponies hard work to keep up with him, scrambling up and down a narrow trail that would have made even mountain sheep look to their laurels.

Above us ice hung from the ledges. Beneath us, more often than not, was a drop of a half-mile, sheer through an amethyst void to the rocks in the bed of a frozen watercourse. At times the loaded ponies had to lean outward over a precipice to the point where equilibrium almost vanished, in order to feel their way around a projecting spur. Wherever the trail was level for a few yards there was ice or frozen snow as slippery as glass, and we grew used to riding with a left leg over nothing while the pony picked his way along the loose rim of infinity.

To have found that trail with the aid of a map and instruments would have been a task to baffle survey engineers. The way the hermit followed it, not hesitating except to pause—leaning into the wind on some naked crag upreared against the sky—to let us overtake him, was a miracle as great as any I have witnessed.

There were places where we had to lift the ponies in the bight of a sling around their rumps, all four of us hauling together and the ponies digging toes into whatever cracks their scrambling hoofs could find. The hermit never lent a hand, but merely stood and watched us scornfully.

He looked more than ever scornful when we called a halt for a meal and to rest the animals—he sticking his tongue in his cheek to transfer one lone grain of roasted barley, which he chewed for as long as it took us to eat a substantial meal of canned army rations.

Whoever mapped out stages on that secret route was, like our hermit guide, a seven-league booted individual. Or possibly the gods, to whom Chullunder Ghose attributed all circumstances that he did not understand, had set the distances—forgetful that mere humans and their ponies had to crawl like tired ants over mountains from one valley to the next.

IT WAS dusk, and the gorges were purple with echoing gloom when we sighted a smoke among crags on a ledge in the distance. It was pitch-dark, starless, with the bellies of black clouds descending on us in a noise of volleying wind, when we rode at last into a great, wide, slot-shaped cavern mouth, from which a maze of passages led into a limestone mountain.

Here we were met by a woman, who looked like a man, with a leather shirt and a mass of wind-blown gray hair framing a face like a fury's. The sinews of her naked, bronzed legs were like whip-cord and the muscles of her arms looked capable of war, with the rocks for weapons. Yet she was as peaceful as she seemed belligerent.

Her age was beyond guessing, though she moved with the agility of youth, swinging herself from the loins as she strode down a passage in front of us, whirling a torch made of resinous wood. She had nothing to say. Our old guide found his tongue and interpreted the gestures she made with the flaring torch, she standing at the entrance of a cave where he explained we were to leave the ponies. There was no light in there, but she followed, after we had felt our way in darkness over horse-dung ages old, and when we began unloading the ponies, she passed her torch to our hermit-guide, and lent a hand so masterfully that Chullunder Ghose stood back and watched her.

Then she spoke at last in vowelly, musical Telugu, mocking the *babu*, calling him "fat Chenresi."

"Mother of a million virgins," he retorted, "I, who have known many women, marvel! I will be Chenresi, and remain forever, if you will be high-priestess and do all the hard work!"

She seemed to have taken a sudden fancy to him, flashing smiles that showed astonishingly perfect yellow teeth. But when she smiled she looked a thousand years old, because her face broke into deep, criss-crossed wrinkles, that all vanished when the smile was gone.

She resumed her torch and led the way out of the cave when we had fed the ponies, taking no notice of our guide except to nod to him when he turned to the left in the passage and went off alone toward the entrance.

We could hear that the storm had burst. There was a din among the crags outside as if whole mountains were being torn up by the wind. No siege-guns ever made more cannonade than that. Hail like the rattle of musketry shattered itself into glassy splinters on the cavern threshold; and through a fissure in the rock-wall the wind screamed like the artillery shells in Flanders. Yet our old guide walked toward the entrance as if nothing in the world were wrong.

Grim remonstrated, hesitating when the woman beckoned with the torch to us to follow her.

"You will let him go out into that?" he objected.

She laughed, with a flash of her eye-teeth that suggested scorn.

"Does duty cease because of wind and snow?" she asked. "And are you in authority here?"

She led along the passage past a dozen openings that echoed to the tumult of the storm, then turned a hairpin corner suddenly and began to descend stairs hewn out of the rock—enormous stairs, each six or eight feet from front to rear, irregularly spaced.

Presently she beat the torch out, and we saw a dim light, down below us and a long way off. Its dimness was peculiar, suggesting an electric arc-light seen through milky mist, and there were strange shapes like the branches of trees in a nightmare forest that kept changing, and changing their color too, as we drew nearer.

I was last. Grim, next to the woman, felt his way with a hand on the wall, we treading in his footsteps because the edges of the stairs were shadowy and irregular.

"By gad—ice!" he called back. And then—

"No—stalactites!"

It was growing noticeably warmer as we kept descending into light that steadily increased. And presently the sound of voices came toward us, like the far-off murmur of a crowd, reminding me of the dull roar at a race-course when the race is on and the crowd leans staring down the course.

BUT the scene, when we turned a sudden corner between gleaming stalactites, resembled nothing I had ever seen or expect to see again. Down three steps was a gallery of solid stalagmite that overhung an oval cavern. Walls, floor, domed roof and a maze of feathery fantastic columns, all were opal-colored, gleaming in the light reflected from a dozen braziers and from a log-fire set nearly in the middle of the cavern.

Around the fire a dozen men were seated, talking and as dignified as owls. It was their quiet voices that had come rumbling up the stairway like the clamor of a crowd. Three or four of them appeared to be Tibetans, but the others were of various Eastern races, and they were of all ages from about forty years old upward.

There was not one visible inch of all that cavern uncovered by calcium carbonate, that had percolated through the limestone roof for countless centuries and finally ceased dripping, leaving the cavern dry and lovelier than fairy-land. It looked like a lacquer of mother-o'-pearl, for there was color in the stuff—rose, blue, green, yellow—blending into iridescence as it caught reflected firelight.

At the end of the cavern facing us, in a shallow, domed recess proportioned perfectly to the dimensions of the cavern, sat three images that had been carved out of the rock. Those, too, were covered with the lacquer-like ooze, as evenly and perfectly as if the overlay were done by hand. The images were double life-size, squatting cross-legged in the Buddhist attitude of meditation, and the one in the center suggested Chenresi—in the way that the moon, perhaps, suggests an arc-light.

The perfection of that carving was so marvelous—the figure in the midst particularly—that neither Grim nor I could take our eyes off it. It almost seemed to

breathe, as if the artist's hand had caught the unseen spirit with the flesh and fashioned its resemblance in the stone. Calm, dignified, benevolent, aware of all immensity, it seemed to meditate on man's relation to the universe; and those on either side sat comprehending what the central image thought.

There was so much wisdom symbolized on the central figure's face, and so much alert intelligence on the faces of the other two, that the impulse was to creep toward them silently and sit and listen. None of us spoke for I don't know how many minutes, although the men around the fire continued talking, their voices booming and mumbling toward the cavern roof.

"They can't be Buddhist carvings," Grim said at last. "It took a hundred thousand years to form this stuff."

He touched the stalagmitic covering of the gallery with his finger. It was as smooth as if hand-polished.

The woman laughed, perhaps at our amazement, and beckoned to us to follow her down hewn steps, covered with the same smooth, ice-hard lacquer, to the cavern floor. They were slippery; and it was clear that once they had been worn in ruts by human feet. But by some unguessable alchemy the ruts had been refilled with the stalagmitic stuff, restoring the perfect squareness of the hewn blocks.

None took the slightest notice of us as the woman led the way across the floor toward those images. The men who sat around the fire continued talking.

Nor did she appear to feel much reverence for the images. She approached them with an air of amusement, pointing at the one in the midst, then turning to laugh at Chullunder Ghose.

"Fat Chenresi!" she exclaimed.

Barring that our *babu* had a full week's growth of curling, coarse, black whiskers, the superficial likeness was amazing, even to the broad, strong shoulders and the well filled paunch. There was the same majestic forehead, the same contemplative calmness of the eyes, the full, well rounded head and width between the ears. The *babu* had it all, except the costume and the dignity.

He laughed, uncomfortably conscious of the difference, and tried to hide confusion with a jest:

"Yes, I sat for the portrait. Does it do me justice?"

Grim touched the woman's arm.

"But is that Chenresi?" he demanded.

He had been examining the image. The surface of the stone had cracked with age, the way dry cheese does, and the stalagmitic substance had come later, filling the cracks and preserving the whole.

"Are you your grandfather?" she retorted.

Then she pointed at the oldest man who sat a little apart from the others within the circle of the firelight.

"Ask him," she suggested.

She led the way toward the fire, we following in a rather diffident group since we seemed to be interrupting earnest conversation that was no concern of ours. But that oldest man looked up and glanced at us as if he knew why we had come, and who we were.

"Have they washed? Have they eaten?" he asked in Telugu.

THE woman made no answer but beckoned us to follow her to an opening, under the gallery by which we had entered. It was a natural break in the wall of the cavern that had been trimmed into a keyhole arch shape, and subsequently covered with the pearly stalagmitic stuff. It led into a cave in which one lamp was burning above a deep trough through which about two feet of water flowed. The sides of the cave were moist from the warmth of the water, which was slightly more than body heat.

We got into that trough and wallowed. It was the first bath we had had for weeks. The feel of good, clean water on my healing wounds was like a taste of paradise, and the water was faintly sulphurous, which may or may not be advised in the medical text-books as a remedy for stabs and saddle-sores, but which made me feel as if my injuries had never happened.

There was room for us all in the trough, and to spare; there would have been room for another half-dozen; and we fooled and splashed like youngsters until the woman's voice drew our attention to the fact that somebody had mentioned food. It was then, but not until then, that we realized that she had stood and watched us all the time, leaning with one hand on the keyhole arch by which we entered.

Grim called her "mother," I suppose to

restore his self-possession, and since we never learned her name, the title stuck to her, she accepting it without comment and adopting the rôle more or less. For instance, she came and examined my wounds, making me keep turning in the lamplight, and when she had satisfied herself she went and brought washed gauzy stuff for bandages, which she tore into strips and helped me to tie on. She also brought some fleeces to be used as towels, laughing because we had to put on filthy clothing over clean skins.

Then she led us to another cave, gloomy, and full of sound because the wind was whistling through a tunnel overhead. There there was hot boiled barley ready for us in enameled iron bowls, with iron spoons that looked like shovels; and tea in the Tibetan style, containing salt, and butter made from yak milk, which is not so bad when you are used to it. Then while we ate she watched us as if eating were a loathsome ritual indulged in only by the ignorant. Nevertheless, she brought us second helpings from some sort of pantry at the end of a dark passage, where a man's voice like an ogre's greeted her each time she entered.

When we had eaten our fill at last, she led us back to the main cavern, where the group was still in conversation around the blazing fire. She gestured at the fire and grinned at us.

"Wood, wood, we shall need wood in the morning!" she remarked. "Snow, snow snow, you will have to dig for it!"

The oldest man, whose mat was a little apart from the others, rebuked her for the speech and motioned to us to be seated in a group together on his right hand where there was a wide gap in the circle. So we sat down on the polished floor, which was neither warm nor comfortable—"like a missionary's heaven," as Grim whispered through the corner of his mouth.

But the woman went and fetched the fleeces on which we had dried ourselves, so we squatted on those and felt less like paupers at a rich man's entertainment.

"You are welcome," said he who had rebuked the woman, and the softly vowelled Hindi that he used suggested even more than friendliness.

He had the gift of putting strangers instantly at ease.

I HAVE called him the oldest man in that strange gathering, and so undoubtedly he was. But under scrutiny his face had the appearance of undying youth. There were no wrinkles; his short, neat beard was black and so was as much of his hair as we could see under the edge of his brown turban. His teeth were regular, well kept and white. He sat bolt upright, bearing his weight from the loins with the grace of an athlete. His hands were strong, firm, young looking and, though obviously used to exercise, well kept, with clean, unbroken nails.

He wore a gold bead necklace tucked into the bosom of a brown smock, and a ring on his middle finger like the one that Rao Singh wore. His cloak was of dark brown homespun, unembroidered. He had noticeably brown eyes, large and well spaced. It was only they, on scrutiny, that hinted at his age; they looked so much too wise to be a young man's.

Yet—if one looked away from him, and looked back suddenly, one wondered that a man so old as he could sit up straight and talk—or even live! There was age, not skin-deep, on his surface, like an egg-shell only more transparent; and within was not exactly youth but a maturity that had refused to grow old.

"You like this place?" he asked. "You wonder at it?"

And we all made affirmations of amazement—asinine remarks, attempting to find adjectives that should describe the indescribable, like four fool tourists looking at the Taj Mahal.

Grim was the first to begin to talk sense:

"When I asked just now whether that is an image of Chenresi, I was asked in return whether I am my own grandfather. Would you care to explain?"

The man smiled.

"They call you Jimgrim, I am told. Men give you a good reputation. I am not surprized at that. Chenresi, as known nowadays, is a Lamaistic legend—to all intents and purposes a god who is worshipped by ignorant monks.

"What you see over there is the symbol that men carved, quite a number of thousands of years before Gautama taught certain spiritual truths. From that original, men took the pattern for Chenresi's image, continually multiplying copies of it, each more imperfect than the last, and finally

forgetting the very existence of the original."

It was on the tip of my tongue to ask him how he knew Grim's name, but before I could speak he himself asked a question, which I answered before Grim could get a word in.

"Why are you here?" he demanded.

"We are on our way to rescue a man named Rait, who is in the hands of people who have been described to us as Dugpas," I said, "but we don't know where he is nor how to get to him."

Some of the younger men who sat within the zone of firelight laughed at that, in the way that schoolboys snicker in class when a newcomer makes a mistake. He looked at them one by one and they grew immediately silent.

"If he were on the moon would you try to rescue him?" he asked.

"But he isn't on the moon," I objected.

"And moreover, I am good at killing Dugpas," said Narayan Singh.

"My son, that is the Dugpa fallacy," he answered, looking friendly at the Sikh. "Dugpas seek to smother thought by killing those who dare to think. Do you think you can cause crime to cease by killing Dugpas?"

"I can reduce the number of those who practise black arts," the Sikh retorted.

"As, for instance, you would lengthen day by killing those who stay awake at night?"

Chullunder Ghose began to scratch his stomach—the invariable prelude to a poser.

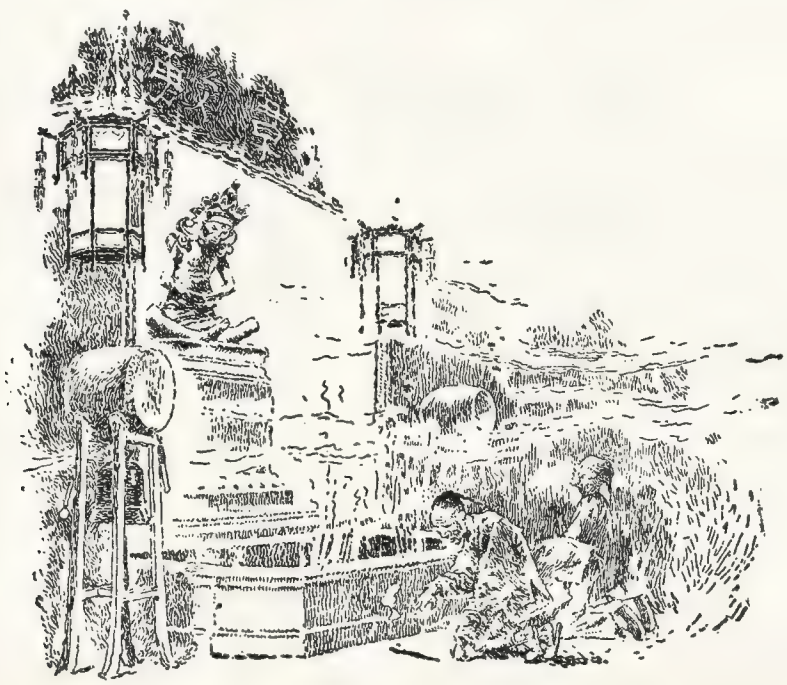
"Yes," he said, "but do we let men who have dangerous diseases walk at large? How shall we protect ourselves?"

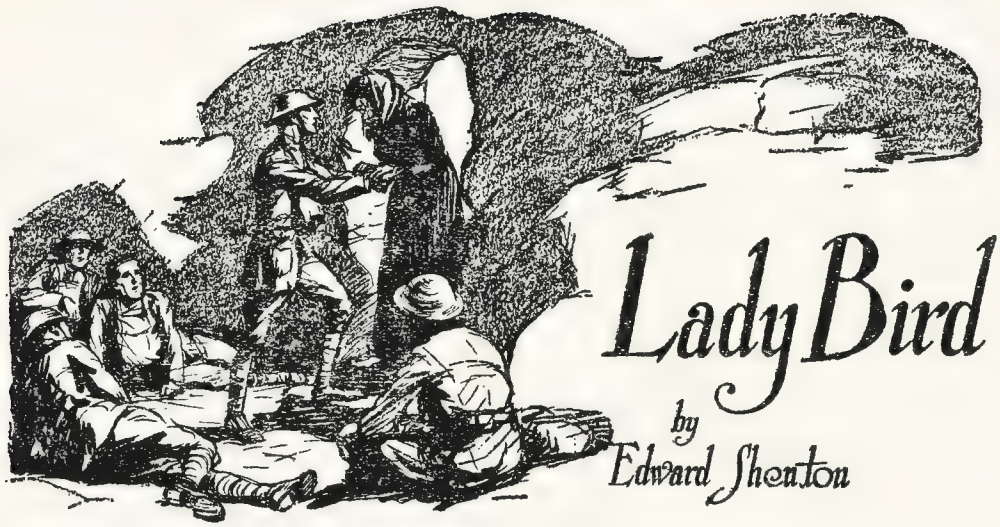
"You avoid disease by living in accordance with the laws of health, which are beginning to be slightly understood. And if you live otherwise you are at the mercy of those agencies that spread disease, whether you are aware of them or not. In the same way, you are at the mercy of Dugpas unless you live in such a way that Dugpas can not possibly manipulate your thought."

"Father of conundrums! How shall one learn to do that?" wondered Grim.

There was a chuckle all around the circle, and then silence. He whom Grim addressed as "father of conundrums" stared into the fire and seemed to search for phrases that might mean something to men unused to his philosophy, until the woman threw dry fuel on the embers with a sudden crash that startled us and summoned him from reverie.

TO BE CONTINUED





Lady Bird

by Edward Shenton

THE truck abruptly left the main highway and stopped in the comparative shelter of a wrecked house. Without turning his head the driver shouted:

"Hey, youse birds, all off! We don't go no further."

"Only one bird in this gang," answered the corporal.

"Yea, only vun boid," said Edelstein, "an' it's a ladyboid."

The driver, not understanding the joke, ignored the cackle of laughter and disappeared through the ruined doorway. Still laughing, the squad descended into the mired road, lifting packs and rifles on to their shoulders. Private Henry Bird, embarrassed as always by his nickname, stood apart from his companions, bending forward to ease the heavy equipment. The others, stamping their cramped legs, waited for the corporal to decide the direction in which they should proceed.

"Guess I better ask an M. P. if he's seen the outfit," he said.

This suggestion sounding reasonable, the squad tramped back to the main street.

"Certainly raised —— in this dump," said the corporal with an air of having been in innumerable destroyed towns.

"Not as bad as the last place," said Connelly.

He disputed any remark made by a non-commissioned officer.

"Sure, it's vorse," Edelstein said cheerfully. "Look at that place. Knogged to nothin'."

The street was deserted except for a detachment of apathetic pioneers repairing a hole in the road. Private Bird gazed at them despondently. Already his neck ached from the pull of the pack-straps. The corporal looked up and down the empty thoroughfare.

"Them M. P.'s sure know how to take cover," he said.

"Do you suppose they're shellin' here?" Bird asked.

"Shellin'? My ——! The Heine lines is just around the corner," said Connelly.

As if in answer they heard the distant moan of a shell and the muffled *cr-r-ump* from the valley where it exploded. They had instinctively tensed their bodies; now they relaxed and Connelly laughed.

"See!"

"Good ways off."

The pioneers, who had scuttled for the houses, came out again, and resumed their shoveling.

"Hey," shouted the corporal, "see anything of the — Division?"

"Never heard of 'em," said a soldier. "That's a Q. M. Division, ain't it?"

"Thinks he's funny, that guy," said the corporal.

He tried to construct a searing reply, but his mind felt heavy. He consoled himself with the thought that it was useless to expend his sarcasm on a banjo pusher, and

turned to search for the absent military police.

"Let's get a dry spot an' eat," said Borley. "My stummuck's clawin' my backbone."

"For ——'s sake, listen to 'im. You been eatin' all day," said Warren.

"I'm hungry."

"You're a regular walkin' stummuck."

"Well, a guy's gotta live."

"Maybe them geenee know where the M. P.'s is," said Connelly.

" 'Lady,' hop over an' ask that fresh duck where the M. P.'s is hidin'," said the corporal.

Bird walked across the road, avoiding with habitual care the puddles and the muddier spots. A light rain began falling. The late afternoon darkened perceptibly in the few moments necessary to reach the group. They had completed the work and were lighting cigarets and scraping the muck from their shoes with the points of their shovels. Just before he came within speaking distance, they started to leave.

"Hey," said Bird, "where's the M. P.'s hidin'?"

"Dunno."

"But, say—" shouted Bird.

The straggling detail vanished between two houses. Bird stood staring after them, the end of the sentence rattling in his throat. He returned to the squad. The rebuff seemed additional weight to the burden of existence. A sense of night descending rapidly came into his mind, and he looked at the sky, expecting to see it dark and near, but it was still light. He observed a balloon hanging in the gray space to the south.

"There's a sausage up there," he called.

The others advanced from the shadow of the buildings and lifted their heads to gaze at the familiar shape. But the corporal was impatient with responsibility.

"Wha'd they say?" he asked.

"Didn't know," answered Bird.

"Them geenee never know where nothin' is but cognac an' wimmen."

"Aint it the truth?" said Connelly. I wisht I was a geenee."

"Gettin' late," said the corporal. "We gotta find th' outfit. We don't wanna stay here all night."

The squad had lost interest. They were absorbed in the movements of the balloon that was being drawn to earth.

"It's a frog sausage, I guess."

"Sure. We ain't that close."

"It looks like a fat guy with a goiter."

When the roofs hid it, they sighed and returned to the problem of their destination.

"Let's go on up the road and see what we find."

"All right."

They slung their rifles and trudged along in the faint mist of rain. As they passed the last house a soldier wearing the brassard of the military police stepped from the doorway. The squad halted abruptly.

"Say," began the corporal. "Seen anything of the — Division?"

"Yea, I seen 'em. Your outfit?"

"Yea, we been on detail, back at the railhead."

"You don't look like 'em. They was the lousiest gang I've ever seen. Oughta be called the black flag division. I could see the cooties crawling, clean across the road."

The corporal felt as if he ought to resent this defamation of his comrades, but couldn't decide, since the remark came from an M. P., whether an argument was diplomatic. The squad shifted uneasily, wondering whether they ought to laugh at the witticism. Choosing the easiest course, the corporal said—

"Pass this way?"

" 'Bout an hour ago."

"Bad up there?"

"Pretty wild."

"Well, let's go," said the corporal.

They resumed their march, but the M. P. called after them:

"Say, youse guys, better not go bunched up like that. Gettin' some shells occasional."

"Five pace intervals," said the corporal stiffly.

THE road crossed a slight hill. Glancing back from the crest, they saw the village swarming with troops, moving in from the way they had just come. The corporal gazed blankly and said—

"Where'd they all come from?"

No one bothered to answer the question. A shallow valley lay before them, with a summit beyond, and a second hill rising above the first. Out of the town the afternoon had returned to normal. There was more light. They straightened and breathed easier. The presence of the troops in their rear removed the feeling of

desolation. In the distance they heard intermittent artillery fire. They proceeded along the road, keeping automatically the positions assumed at the remark of the M. P. The fields beside them were pitted with a few shell-holes. A dead mule lay on its back in the ditch.

"Phew," said Connelly.

They detoured, and continued to advance on the left of the road. At the bottom of the slope they passed a battery of short howitzers, silent, with the gunners seated near their shelters.

"See anything of the — Division?" said the corporal.

"One battalion went up about an hour ago," answered at artilleryman.

The corporal paused, perplexed.

"Only one?"

"Yea."

"Which one?"

"How should I know," replied the gunner. "Say, wait a minute. Droovinick had a friend in it. Hey, Nick, what outfit was it what went by?"

A round, grimy face lifted above a protection of sheet iron.

"Weecha one?"

"The one with your friend in it."

"Oh! K Coompeeny —th Eenfeentry."

"That's us," said the corporal cheerfully. "That's our outfit."

The discovery gave him a sensation of importance. He rested a moment to exhibit his knowledge of military proceedings.

"Much doin' up here?" he said.

"Nothin' atall."

"Uh hard-boiled M. P. back there—" he indicated the town and the M. P.'s importance with a gesture of contempt—"said it was just plain ——."

"Oh, them —— M. P.s."

"Yea. One shell, an' they got everybody dead."

The two laughed and the squad produced a polite echo.

"Well, so long. We gotta get to our outfit. Don't drop no mustard gas on us."

This final pleasantry restored the corporal to good humor; he recovered his self-esteem and stepped out at a better pace. The others panted keeping up with him, until Connelly grumbled—

"Where's the fire?"

The slope was gradual but wearing. Private Lady Bird, at the end of the little column, had difficulty maintaining the quick walk. A vague idea that even crawling would be too rapid an approach to the place where they were going, lurked in his mind. He wished that he could have remained on detail at the railhead. The holes in the fields, the villages through which they had come—houses without roofs, great caverns blown in their walls, rafters broken and burned, the twisted trees, uprooted telegraph-poles—appalled him. For six hours he had seen the trail of the battle, until some true image of its enormity, its incredible force was forming in his brain.

He tried to halt this slow realization by thinking of remote, casual things, or of people and places, loved and remembered; his desk in the office of the Velt Leather Goods Company, the two weeks' vacation at Atlantic—not this summer—Mr. Scatterly's secretary whom he considered a real lady. With a start he found himself unable to recall her last name; Madge—Madge Burney—Bolton—

"Hey, Lady, get the lead out."

The squad was well ahead of him. Ashamed, he broke into a weak-kneed trot and resumed his place.

"Let's fall out for a smoke," said Connelly.

The corporal agreed and they sat on the bank, unslinging their packs. They still possessed a few ready-mades. Borley took from his haversack a round can of monkey-meat and eyed it lingeringly.

"Eat your iron-rations an' you'll get ——," said the corporal.

Bird lighted a cigaret and leaned back drawing the comforting smoke into his lungs. The spray of rain cooled his hot skin. He was tired and sleepy. Lying there, his thin face appeared smaller, seemed to shrink into the dark oval of his helmet. His eyes were large, uncomprehending, in the tenuous shadow. The length of his nose was exaggerated in melancholy perspective, and a little sullen mouth crumpled pathetically under the constricting chin-strap. He seemed much younger than his companions, more frail—wearier. The tightly wrapped leggings disclosed no swell of muscle, his legs from knee to ankle were two perpendicular lines. The woolen trousers too large by a size hung in despondent folds. He had unbuttoned his blouse, then fastened it again and missed a buttonhole; a peak of stiff cloth rose beneath his throat, rubbed his chin——

The squad heard the shells coming and received at the same moment a sense of their nearness. They flung themselves toward the ditch, ducking their heads and pressing close to the wet earth. Two explosions on the far side of the road shook the ground under them. Overhead the fragments went by with a shrill crying. Columns of black smoke, twin pillars narrow at the base and distended above, sprouted before their frightened eyes. The noise beat at the insides of their heads. They could feel the air suddenly lift and settle.

"Let's get out of here," said Connelly.

They leaped to their feet and ran to the top of the hill where the bank above the level of their heads furnished a more convincing protection. These were the first shells to burst near them. The corporal attempted a jocular remark, but fright and the brief run had taken his breath. Edelstein whispered to himself in mixed Yiddish and English.

"Say," Borley said, "I dropped my monkey-meat."

He started back at a dog-trot while they watched him in amazement. Presently he returned cleaning the muddy tin on the sides of his breeches. They were surprized at his arrival. It was as if he had been resurrected; a dead man appearing unexpectedly in full health. The corporal said—

"Your stummuck's gonna be the death of you."

"General court martial for losin' iron-rations," answered Borley.

"He's too dumb to get killed," said Connelly.

The second valley was revealed by their position. They could see a group of buildings beside the road and numbers of men coming and going. One ambulance stood on the near side of the largest structure; another was approaching them, bouncing along the road. Beyond the houses, a line of seated figures made a tan edge on the white highway. Passing them were a few men walking slowly. As these reached the buildings they entered a large gateway and vanished. The ambulance swept by with a buzz of changing gears.

"Full up," said the corporal wisely.

A ravine crossed diagonally at the lowest part of the valley. It was thinly wooded, with a path at the center. Among the trees a group of infantry were advancing toward the right where the far hill, curving back, lifted a bare summit into the heavy sky.

From where the squad sat they could distinguish still a third crest, dulled by mist and the failing light to a soft, puffy semi-globe in the distance. Little twirls of white smoke appeared, uncurled and shredded to nothing along the smooth gray-blue surface.

"Somebody's gettin' theirs up there," said Connelly.

"That must be our outfit," said the corporal pointing to the seated men. "We'd better be movin'."

RISING, he reached for his rifle and said in surprize—

"Where's Morgan?"

The squad looked about them in equal amazement. Morgan's pack and rifle rested against the bank but he was not in sight.

"My ——," said Connelly, "he was here a seccunt ago."

"That boob's always wanderin' off somewheres."

They heard his voice suddenly above them, high-pitched with excitement and dread. Glancing up they saw him, his pale pop-eyes protruding almost level with the end of his nose.

"Gee, fellers! You oughta see what's in the woods."

Something in the inflection started them trembling. Bird's hands became wet and cold, and his chest prickled with fear.

"What's up? Where you bin?"

"In here," said Morgan.

He peered over his shoulder at the thin trees, lowering his voice, bending down to lessen the space between himself and the others.

"Back in the woods. Come on!"

With one accord they scrambled up the bank.

"Wait," said Warren. "I forgot my rifle."

"You don't need no rifle," said Morgan laughing.

Bird thought there was a tremor of fright below his mirth. They entered the woods, treading silently on Morgan's heels, ducking at shadows, twitching when a branch snapped. The trees were all second-growth saplings. Abruptly they reached a small clearing. Five gray vague lumps lay in the open space.

"—— a blazes," said Connelly.

The soft mounds were the bodies of dead

Germans. They were swollen in death, and appeared of an incredible lightness, as if at any moment they might rise and float gently away on the darkening air. Their shoes were gone, and one corpse was without socks; its bare feet were black. The faces were shapeless, coal-dark globes. At the odor Lady Bird felt his stomach constrict. He stood petrified, gaping at the motionless figures. Something in his head began to loosen, so that his thoughts escaped him. He tried frantically to secure one of the ideas as they swirled in his mind. It seemed as if his own stomach were swelling like the bellies of the dead Germans.

Connelly stepped into the glade and poked the nearest lump with his rifle. Immediately a long hissing sigh issued from it and it collapsed slowly—appeared to breathe and sigh. The garments folded across the shrunken torso, a horrible stench gagged the squad. Lady Bird screamed and fled with the others close behind him.

Once more on the road, their fright exploded in anger at Morgan. They exhausted their vocabularies on his propensity for exploration and began sullenly to gather their packs. Lady Bird had wanted to keep on running, but the squad's halting stopped him. He leaned over, retching. Suddenly Connelly started laughing. He roared with mirth and pounded his hands together.

"So help me ——," he gasped, "that's the first time I ever heard of anything like that."

The others looked at him with dismay. The outbreak seemed almost sacrilegious.

"Well, they're dead, ain't they," he said. "An' they're Heinies, ain't they?"

"Come on," said the corporal irritably. "For Pete's sake."

They continued along the gently descending road until they reached the group of buildings. It was the remains of a farmhouse. With the stables it made the usual square about a large court. Over the entrance was a Red Cross flag fastened flat upon the archway. Peering through, they saw two or three dozen soldiers lying on stretchers or sitting propped against abutments. No one spoke, but the air was heavy with a sough of thick breathing. The squad hurried on.

Lady Bird, trailing at the end, although they had shortened the distance separating one from another, walked blindly. That was death. Those things in the wood; the unimaginable odor, the black faces swollen featureless. He had seen only one dead person in his life before they had gone to the clearing—an aunt.

As he had peered into the casket where she lay, he thought death rather beautiful. Her face was calm, contented, the lips smiled slightly; the serene colorless hands folded peacefully upon her breast. These others, though—

He lay beneath the inert thin boughs of trees, swelling, putrifying; the buttons of his blouse tugged at their slits of cloth as his stomach puffed; they burst the threads, hopped like bronze fleas and fell back upon him. The edges spread until he could see the white mound of his belly distending, like a great soft soap-bubble; see the skin fraying and preparing to tear; each fiber pulling apart and becoming discolored; white first, blue, gray, black. He was black from head to foot. He stumbled, clutched at his waist and felt relieved at the accustomed shape. He hurried after the squad.

THEY had reached the end of the battalion by this time. In amazement they gaped at the figures seated along the low ridge of the road. Their uniforms were torn, soiled. Equipment hung in any fashion from their shoulders; some were without leggings. They slunk disconsolately. Their eyes, sunken in the harsh dirty skin of unwashed faces, held the same expression, a fixed glare, unanimated; a sort of intense apathy, stupidly belligerent. They lay in sprawled, overlapping groups without noticing that they touched one another. Some had removed their helmets, and in the gray light their faces were like Buddhas emptied of wisdom—drained masks, with the skin crushed upon the bones.

"Where's K Company?" said the corporal.

A toneless voice answered—

"On up!"

When the squad found their company they were received without interest. The platoon sergeant told them to sit down.

"Anywhere. We're going up tonight."

In the intimacy of their particular comrades there was a brief exchange of small talk.

"Look at the millionaire squad."

"You'll get yours now."

"Wait till tomorrow."

"Where's Lieutenant Brice?" said the corporal.

"Back in some farm."

"What doin'?"

"Rottin'."

"My ——," said Morgan. "Bumped?"

"On the nose."

"Whose leadin' the platoon?"

"A ninety-day baby. He's all right, though. Only he don't know nothin'."

"Goin' over tomorrow."

"So they say."

"Lady Bird looks sick."

There was a rustle of mirthless laughter.

"We hit some mildewed Dutchmen in a wood," said Connelly. "The smell was awful. We all was vomitin' up all over the place."

"You'll get used to it," said the soldier generously. "We was like that at first. It gets your guts somethin' awful."

Lady Bird rested his face in his hands, pressing with all his strength upon the temples. He was sick; sick with a fright that wrenched his body, unsteadied his brain. He wanted his mother. The word formed on his lips and required all his power to stifle—

She sat across from him sewing, the lamplight outlining her serene face and full figure. He was working on accounts for the office. Ben, his brother, in the corner talked over the telephone in a low, gentle voice to the girl he was to marry. Above the mantel, scarcely visible, hung his favorite picture, a painting by an artist named Whistler. The new rug looked like a bed of pale spring flowers—

"Here's another batch," said a voice.

Four soldiers came by carrying a stretcher, shoulder high. The man they carried moaned at regular intervals. The violent sound leaped high into the evening. Two others walked a few paces in the rear. Their linked arms suggested the stroll of two friends. They trod leisurely, carefully, as though all eternity was theirs for sauntering. Only when they came closer could the seated troops discern that the head of one was a round, white ball of bandages, and the other, the sleeve of his blouse cut away, disclosing blood-soaked linen to the elbow, was leading his companion. A third man followed behind them. He was apparently untouched.

"Any better up there?" asked a K Company soldier.

The man with a great effort mouthed a faint—

"No."

"What's the matter, buddy?"

Again the struggle.

"Gassed."

"Tough luck."

The fellow grinned feebly and went on.

An officer walked briskly toward them. He was so short as to appear below the required height. His uniform was immaculate, his freshly shaved jaws were incongruous among all those stained, stubbled faces. His small mustache was waxed.

"——, he's a-shined his shoes," said the sergeant in an awed voice.

"Who's he?" asked Connelly.

"Our looie."

"My," said Edelstein, "ain't he a svell, fer ——'s sake."

"What's his name?"

"Second Lieutenant Archer Cathrop Ames, 2nd."

"Come off."

"Hones' to ——. I saw it on the payroll."

"Holy cats!"

Lieutenant Ames stopped and smiled cheerfully. The sergeant and the corporal stood and saluted.

"Now, now," said the officer. "Don't be so formal."

"Fourth squad just blew in, Lieutenant," said the sergeant. "They was at the railhead. This here's Corporal Hartman."

"How are you, Corporal," said Ames holding out his hand. "Are your men in good shape?"

"Yes, sir. How de do. Very well, sir," said the corporal expecting to have the earth split beneath him.

"We'll need you tomorrow," the lieutenant said. "Sergeant, get all the non-coms. and come over here. Tell the men not to eat their reserve rations, but to get as much rest as possible. Tell them, too, we expect to have a hot meal for them before morning."

"Yes, sir."

The night had come completely. Along the road the troops slept. Lady Bird had fallen into a torpor in which his body vanished and his mind continued to conjure alternate images of the past and the future. The memory of his beloved mother remained

so tangible as to bring to his nostrils the odor of sachet that permeated her clothes. She was the only woman he had ever loved. From the time his father died they had been companions; he took her to the theater, the movies. They read aloud to each other in the evenings at home. He discussed all the problems of the office with her. She was mentally his wife, in the most intimate mingling of two minds.

"Chow! Chow! Here's the mess wagon."

The sibilant tones aroused him. No conception of time having passed lingered. Overhead he saw a sky, clear, distant, heavy with stars. The wind was chill, refreshing. The cooks were going up and down the line, ladling the hot slum from large cans into the eager mess pans. Automatically he unbuckled the flap of the haversack and extended the aluminum oval.

"Take out your hardware, goofy," growled the K. P.

He fumbled with the spoon—he had long ago lost both knife and fork—and felt the warm gravy splash on his hand. The slum had an appetizing smell. He ate rapidly, not tasting the food; then he slept. Scarcely had he closed his eyes when some one was nudging his ribs.

"On your feet," said Morgan's voice. "We're movin' out."

LADY BIRD saw the darkness full of the vague shapes of standing men. A dreary mutter of voices stirred the night. Lieutenant Ames hurried along the column, asking each corporal if his squad was ready.

Presently they began marching. They left the road and crossed innumerable fields. The battalion separated. Each company entered the gloom and disappeared.

At the end of half an hour of rapid walking they halted. The squad was silent, shifting restlessly, breathing quickly, but unwilling to speak. The advance was resumed, but slower. Entering a road, they found themselves suddenly immersed in a blackness where it was necessary to hold to the pack of the man preceding. Stumbling, bumping into trees, they felt as if they had sunk into a morass of ink. Air was difficult to obtain for their lungs contracted by excitement.

"Me neck's all clogged like a sewer," whispered Connelly.

"You won't have no neck this time tomorrow," said Morgan.

Connelly tripped and swore.

"Don't swear," said Borley.

His voice seemed to come out of the branches above.

"You don't wanta die cursin', do you? I wisht I'd brought that Bible the Y. M. guy gave me."

"Holy cats!" said Morgan. "You ain't scared, funny face?"

"Well, there's no sense cursin' like that when you don't know how long you're gonna live. There's no use gettin' God sore at you, is there?"

"God?" said Connelly. "There ain't no God, I'm tellin' you."

"You can't say things like that," cried Borley. "You're a liar and you know it."

"Pipe down in the cheap seats," said the sergeant. "Shut your —— yap. This ain't no tea party."

The argument ended abruptly. Without warning they came into the comparative light of the open fields. A short, steep hill, the height magnified by the night, rose to illimitable distances; pressed upon the stars. The tired company climbed, panting. The squad with full equipment, including two blankets and an extra pair of shoes, were exhausted before they had ascended half the slope.

"Here goes the works," said Connelly.

He stopped and threw away all but his rations, tooth-brush, razor and socks. The others did the same. Relieved, they hastened after the platoon.

"I'd like to ditch these bandoliers,' 'said Morgan.

"Keep 'em," Connelly replied. "You'll want 'em bad, when you do."

The crest of the hill was tufted with a dense patch of woods. Groups of soldiers appeared at the edge and walked toward the company. They were the men of the division coming out. Beneath the trees they dove into the same impenetrable dark. After a short, stumbling distance they halted. There was an interminable wait while the men leaned against trunks of unseen trees and dozed standing.

"Bring your squad this way, Corporal," spoke Lieutenant Ames.

They followed him for a hundred blind yards.

"Lie down here," he said. H-hour is four-twenty-seven. The platoon will go to

the limit of the woods in squad columns, deploy and advance. Don't let your men bunch, Hartman."

He departed. They could hear the brush crackling under his feet. At no time had they been able to see him.

The soldiers dropped to the ground. The more experienced slept at once, but the new squad was too nervous. Borley crept across to Lady Bird and pressed close to him.

"You think there's a God, don't you, Lady?" he whispered.

"Yes," said Bird. "Certainly."

"That guy Connelly's hard-boiled. He's a tough one. You know, he comes from Kensington. He'd laugh at a murder. Honest, it makes my blood run cold when he talks that way. It's all right for a guy not to believe, but he oughtn't to say so. Not now anyway, see?"

His voice went on whispering in a plaintive monotone. Lady Bird rested his chin on his crossed arms. His body trembled at intervals—a quick shudder.

"You cold, Lady?" said Borley.

"A little."

"So'm I. I wisht I'd kept a blanket. That's some more of Connelly's doin'."

They covered themselves as much as possible with slickers and remained silent. Dawn collected imperceptibly. The light hung gray icicles in the branches overhead. The barrage began. The shells whined, sighed, howled. The noise seemed to hasten the day. They listened to the explosions and scarcely breathed. A whistle blew.

"That's us," said the sergeant.

His voice was coarse, as if he were catching cold.

With the corporal leading, the squad walked to the field beyond. A mist, knee-high, hid their legs. The sky above was vaporous. Only the middle strata seemed clear. It was as if the shells had swept a pathway through the tenuous fog. The troop appeared to be wading into a shallow lake of silver.

"Deploy there, you," called the sergeant.

Reluctantly the squad separated. They were at the extreme right of the platoon as it was on the right of the company. Lady Bird, between Edelstein and Connelly, peering across, saw an irregular line of men on his left, but no one on the other side of the Irishman. Connelly walked jauntily, his rifle slung over his shoulder. Edelstein leaned forward from the waist, thrusting his body with a quiet fury at the unresisting air. The field dipped, rose to a slight eminence, descended again, and then vanished in the mist. The barrage had moved, the shells broke some way ahead. Far to the right machine guns spluttered, but only silence lay before them. Lady Bird stared until his eyes ached. His head felt too large for his helmet. He thought, suddenly, that he had forgotten his rifle and turned to go back. The sergeant, a few paces in the rear, shouted at him.

"I forgot my rifle," said Lady Bird.

"You —— fool, it's in your hand!"

Bird glanced in astonishment at the rifle he carried by the strap. Shame at the stupidity momentarily overcame his fear. He ran after his comrades, caught them, and plodded on, revolving the incident in his mind, seeking an excuse for such behavior. Reaching the crest of the uptilted field, they saw the declivity, clear of mist. Instantly machine guns fired upon them. As if they were linked with a single line, the men dropped to the ground, throwing their packs before their faces. They lay motionless, not attempting to shoot. Connelly shouted something that Lady Bird could not hear and pointed to the right. In a few minutes Lieutenant Ames crawled toward them. He advanced in that awkward position with a certain elegance, smiling at each soldier as he passed. When he was opposite Connelly he wriggled forward.

"The skipper," he said loudly, "wants a machine-gun nest cleaned up. Do you know anything about the procedure?"

"Not a thing," answered Connelly.

"Neither do I," said the lieutenant. "Come along."

"Sure."

"You too," he called to Lady Bird, "and you," waving Edelstein.

THE four, Lieutenant Ames leading, started in the direction of what appeared to be a dry ditch, clogged with stones and dead blackberry bushes. When they arrived the cut could be seen zigzagging toward the opposite slope. Hours elapsed while they crept along, cutting the palms of their hands, tearing the knees of their breeches.

"*Azerenu Jehovah Elohenu!*" muttered Edelstein. "*Azerenu Jehovah Elohenu!*"

Lady Bird felt his arms weakening. He

was deathly sick. Edelstein stopped crawling. His shoulders hunched toward his ears. The lieutenant and Connelly were several yards beyond. With a tremendous effort Bird said:

"Move on. We'll lose them."

Edelstein did not answer. Bird saw a thin, red streak flow slowly out of his ear and soak into the dry earth.

Horror flung darkly over his vision. Stalks of brittle bush above him swayed gently. Bits of their tips hopped off as though clipped by invisible shears. Ahead was a slight hollow with a pile of rocks on the edge. He leaped frantically to the shelter and lay there sobbing—

Time became non-existent. Bird rose and sank in the colorless sea of semiconsciousness. At intervals he was aware of sound, of light, patterns of shadow on his face, on the ground about him; then he fell into emptiness; revived; collapsed—

Connelly poured a few drops of warm water into Bird's mouth.

"What's wrong?" he said. "Hit?"

"Edelstein," whispered Lady.

"Fini for the Kike."

"I fainted, I guess."

"Yea. We gotta get back. The looie sent me to find you. Can you walk?"

"Maybe."

"Stick your arm over my shoulder. You'll be O. K. in a minute. All played out. That's why you slipped off." His voice was kindly.

He unscrewed the top of Bird's canteen and held it while he drank.

"All set?"

"I feel better."

"Let's wander."

"Can we stand up?"

"Sure. The company's on the hill. Half a kilo away."

They started across the open and the activity helped restore Bird's strength. Connelly talked cheerfully.

"That looie—maybe he ain't one baby. We come clean up behind a nest with three mutts in flower-pot lids shooting a gun like all ——. He popped one and I bumped another. The last guy stuck up his hands. But the looie says, calm like, 'We ain't got time for that,' an' let 'em have it.

"Then he says, 'I don't know nothin' about these Maxims, except theory.' So we points the thing toward a likely clump. He says, 'If you do this something oughta happen.' It did. Out runs about twenty Dutchmen. Then the fellows come up all soft as pie. The looie says, 'I guess we done pretty well, if I do say so.'"

"Where are they now?" asked Bird feebly.

"Dug in on the next hill yelping for a barrage."

"Is it awfully bad?"

"It's all sweet this side. But try and cross. Zowie. It's lights out. There's a good-sized burg in front with about a million machine guns to the block."

They arrived at the place where the platoon lay in shallow pits on the hillside.

"Hello," said the corporal, lifting a face soiled beyond recognition. "Where'd you find Lady?"

"He was with the Kike when he got his," said Connelly. "Lady was stunned proper, wasn't you, Lady? He was still goofy when I got there."

Gratitude for the protection of Connelly's words brought Bird almost to tears. He hid his face and stretched full length while spasms of breathing racked his chest.

"Six guys and Sergeant Mulhouse got bumped," said Morgan amiably. "Boy, I wisht I was back at that railhead. I haven't even shot my gun onct."

"You oughta been with the loot and me," said Connelly. "I'm gonna start puttin' notches in my rifle."

"The poor little Kike. He was a good guy."

"Yea. It's tough all right."

"Who wants some hot peas?" called Borley.

"—— a'mighty. Can you beat that guy?"

Borley was crouching in a shell hole warming a mess-pan of peas over a can of solidified alcohol. His small eyes shone greedily in rims of grime. He stirred the food with a finger, licking it in tentative enjoyment, and finally gulped several spoonfuls rapidly.

"There ain't no war can keep me from eatin'," he said.

He stood up, stepping from the hole, and shook as if he had been tripped. The pan, tilting, spilled the peas in a light-green wave over the edge. He stared in dismay as the handle slipped from his fingers, clutched at his shoulder and rolled over backward. His feet, kicking lazily, were the only part of him in view.

"He's hit," said Connelly.

Morgan rushed to the shell-hole and dragged Borley out.

"Bad," he called.

"There's a first-aid station in the hollow," shouted a voice.

Morgan staggered down the hill, half carrying, half pulling Borley.

"Just what I said," Connelly cried angrily. "His —— stummuck. Some of these kids ought ta still be nursin'. This man's war ain't no place for comic characters."

The others were silent, quieted by the manner in which Borley had been shot. Vaguely they felt it was unjust. A fellow ought ta be able to eat. If they'd been advancing—

"A dirty game," said Warren speaking for the squad.

After a while Morgan returned scrubbing furiously at the front of his blouse with a fragment of khaki handkerchief.

"The —— got sick an' spewed them peas all over me while I was luggin' him," he said. "That's gratatood for you."

The squad roared with laughter; even Bird managed a smile. Connelly, on his back, threw handfuls of dry earth into the air and shouted.

"Is he hurt much?" asked the corporal.

"Through the chest. The doc wouldn't say nothin'. He just about ruined this blouse of mine."

All morning the line remained stationary while the shells from both sides moaned across the hot sky. The squad was uncomfortable from thirst, but willing to stay in their shelters. Several patrols went, at intervals, from various sections but their appearance on the crest resulted in a hurricane of .77, one-pounder and machine-gun fire.

At noon the reserve company of their battalion dug in among the bushes at the rear. The major crawled to the crest, a little, plump officer, a rucksack slapping his stomach, and stared for a long time through field-glasses at the town.

"I bet he's looking for a vin blanc sign," said Connelly.

The major retired. K Company officers held a consultation about the captain, who squatted like an immense frog, his knees against his chest. Lieutenant Ames, three sergeants and two corporals composed the gathering.

"He's a fightin' baby, that Looie," said Connelly.

His tone was warm, it held the low caressing note in which a father speaks of his favorite child.

"Ain't he, Lady? I guess we know, don't we?"

Connelly's attention was restoring Bird's courage. He went and lay beside the Irishman, seeming to draw strength from the closeness. Lethargy settled upon the platoon. The battle withdrew slowly from their consciousness. They sprawled in extraordinary postures in the shallow pits. Later a detail collecting the canteens crawled away after water. The artillery fire dwindled. Only Connelly was active. He hacked at the hardwood of his gun-stock with a huge French clasp-knife. When the notch was carved to his satisfaction he said to Bird—

"Let's see what's doin'."

THEY squirmed the few yards to the crest of the hill, and sheltered by tufts of grass, stared at the town. For an hour they watched the occasional 105's bursting among the houses. Not a man or animal moved anywhere in their sight. The town was small, divided by a narrow stream. A white, square church tower, undamaged, lifted above the roofs. In the breathless afternoon the heat stirred over the peaceful fields.

"It doesn't seem possible," said Bird.

"Stand up and see what happens," replied Connelly grinning.

The slope beyond the town ascended gradually to a distant plateau where a row of German observation balloons hung at various heights.

The quiet continued unbroken. Lady Bird shared his last tin of corned beef with Connelly. A rumor started that a patrol from M Company had entered the town and found it deserted.

"Bull," said the sergeant.

At dusk a bombardment opened upon the town. Lieutenant Ames ran briskly along the company line.

"Going down," he said. "We been informed that the Germans have withdrawn to the other side of the river."

The sergeant groaned.

"Still fallin' for that stuff.'

The advance began quickly. Lady Bird followed Connelly. They crossed the fields at a double and reached the first house. A few small shells dropped behind them. One or two bit viciously at the deserted road

leading into the main street. A man fell with a high, quick call like a gull, but the rest arrived at the sheltering walls breathless and mystified. The lack of opposition puzzled them. It was abnormal, uncanny. They organized a line and waited panting while patrols investigated the streets. These went several blocks into the town before machine guns fired upon them.

"Craziest war I was ever in," said the sergeant. "First you can't stick your nose out and then we trots into the joint and nobody cares."

"This place ain't no good," said a soldier. "That's why. Them hills in back is better. Wait a while. This is gonna be a —— of a dump, believe me."

"Well, it don't seem natural."

"There wasn't any one here but a coupla machine guns anyway. Now they lit out for a regular place."

"They're on the run," said Connelly. "Once they get goin' maybe they won't know howta stop."

"No such luck. They got mines all over the burg, I guess."

The thought of such submerged death, possibly beneath the spot where the company rested, frightened them. They waited apprehensively in the gathering dusk, but nothing happened. The regimental reserve passed through their tired ranks, penetrating tentatively into the town, exploring the cellars, establishing strong points in the houses along the river. Gradually a feeling of security returned. Bird and Connelly sat with their backs to a garden wall, smoking. The blue evening light rested their strained eyes. Evening.

Bird sat with his mother on the porch of their Spring Garden Street house. Early summer. The air cooled. An arc swayed pendants of crisp light among the heavy trees. Two girls in white dresses on the porch next door whispered, giggled, lay back in their chairs, silent, wide-eyed, listening to the dream in their anxious hearts. Henry scarcely noticed them.

"If I get the raise we can build a place in Lansdowne or Highland Park."

"You shouldn't spend your money that way. You ought to think of getting married."

"That's silly, Mother. Why should I? I'd rather live with you."

"You're the best son that ever a mother had—"

"I'm happy."

Comfort. Peace—

The war was over. Its terror drained, the remainder seemed colored with glory. They were voyaging home.

"Bird, you're a patriot. Your desk will be here when you get back. God bless you, my boy."

Mr. Scatterley's mustache muffled the emotional voice.

"Let's hope it's soon over."

Over! Finished. Done with— The warm twilight cuddled the drowsy boy—

Captain Benz appeared, a tall stooped figure, his helmet thrust away from a dull forehead. A shattered tree leaned above him, and the war was created again from those two silhouettes.

"We're to be in reserve tonight," Bird heard him tell the sergeant. "Find a cellar for your platoon, and notify me when you have. Post guards and let the others sleep. M and J Companies are along the river. Be ready to move at any time."

The sergeant and the two remaining corporals of the platoon went down the street. When they returned the men followed them, slinking close to the houses, entered a gloomy stone archway and descended a flight of steps to a low room. The Germans had been there. Pallets of straw, a soiled mattress or two were on the floor. Some one lighted a piece of candle and the men stretched out. They were weary beyond comprehension, dirty, thirsty and hungry. They slept at once.

"Hey, down there. Hey, youse infantry."

Bird listened to the words falling from an enormous height into the exhaustion of his sleep. His mind began the long journey to reality. Who wanted him? Why was he being called? Youse infantry. That meant him. Far away he saw the sun shining, but as he approached its glow faded, until he recognized it as a candle. Mutters of protest sounded about him. The voice continued.

"Come to life. Snap out of it."

"It must be God," Bird thought and opened his eyes.

A burly soldier with a muffled shape beside him stood half-way down the stairs.

"What the ——'s wrong?" asked the corporal.

"Take care of this dame," said the man. "We found her wandering along a street."

"A woman," said Connelly. "What's she doing here, for ——'s sake?"

"Dunno. We ain't got no place for her."

"Well, neither have we. Who is she?"

"An old French dame. She's batty."

"Tell her to parti."

"Some looie told me to put her down here."

"What looie?"

"How should I know? Do you suppose I go asking every looie questions? Come on, somebody, help her down."

"Help her? Can't she walk?"

Bird was awake by now. He tried to arrange the conversation in his sleep-dozed mind. A woman here; an old woman. The thought was horrible. He arose groaning to his hands and knees. An old woman.

"I'll help her," he said.

"Sit down, Lady."

"Make the guy take care of her."

"We ain't got no room here."

"What's the boy scout doin'? His good act?"

BIRD became furiously angry.

"You pack of slobs," he shouted. "She's an old woman."

"What's the difference? She aint' got no business here.

Ignoring them, Bird mounted the few steps and held out his hand.

"*Voulez-vous descender, madame?*" he said.

The old woman groped for his arm, came down and stood clinging to him. Bird kicked a soldier lying on a near-by pallet.

"Who the —— you kickin'?"

"Shut up," shouted Bird fiercely.

They stared at him in amazement. Connelly began to laugh.

"Atta boy, Lady," he said. "Paste 'im if he won't move."

The old woman sank on to the straw. Bird squatted near her.

"*Avez-vous faim?*" he asked. "*Voulez-vous manger?*"

"*Oui, m'sieu. Oui,*" she spoke a few sentences rapidly that Bird could not understand.

"Who's got something to eat?" he asked.

"Oh, pass out. We ain't got nothin' for ourselves."

"What's the —— frog doing here anyway?"

"I bet she's a spy."

"Connelly," said Bird, "I gave you half my last corned beef. You've got to help me get some food for this woman."

"Sure," said Connelly.

He pulled a tin of hardtack out of the nearest haversack and handed it to Bird. The old woman munched at the dry biscuits. In the feeble glow he could see her face, wrinkled, pallid under a fringe of shawl wrapped about her head. The lips fell inward, the point of her nose drooped toward her mouth; pale, expressionless eyes lay between heavy curves of dry skin. The mind seemed to have gone, leaving a simple calmness, a gentle, abstract shell where speech issued mechanically. Hunger and thirst remained, but no emotion; sensation had gone, too, and with it, fear, hope, desire to live or die. Her hands were deformed, her body was twisted—worn.

She ate dumbly. Bird was absorbed by a feeling of pity. He stared at her serene, benumbed eyes. By now the humor of the platoon had changed. They were all awake and less irritable. The idea of Bird's kicking any one amused them. Several were feeling secretly ashamed of their attitudes. The reaction took form of obscene, jocular remarks addressed to Bird, who gave no attention.

"She oughtn't to stay here, though," said the corporal. "This ain't no place for a woman. Why don't you take her to the dressing-station. They could run her out in an ambulance. She'd get to some safe place."

"Where is it?"

"Go find it."

Bird left without speaking. The platoon gazed at one another dumfounded. The old woman continued to eat and did not notice his departure.

A shell exploded somewhere in the town. Connelly jumped; arose nervously, went to the floor above, and peered out into the night. Ghosts of houses lifted gray in the darkness. Toward the river an occasional rifle cracked. Balls of a signal rocket—white butterflies—rose quickly in the distance; vanished. He waited ten minutes. No more shells came and he returned to the cellar. Bird arrived a little while after. He scarcely glanced at his comrades.

"Find it?" said Connelly.

He nodded.

"Any shellin'?"

He looked at the Irishman in surprize.

"Not a one."

"I heard one."

"Oh, that was in the other end of the town."

He approached the woman, but his French was insufficient to explain his intention of taking her to a place where she could be evacuated. He said:

"*Allez-avec moi, madame, s'il vous plait.*"

"*Oui, monsieur.*"

She arose unhesitantly, breathing quickly, and turned to gaze at the soldiers sprawled in the wavering light. There was a slight alteration in her features; she dipped her face forward as though thanking them for the shelter. Then she looked at Bird and mumbled:

"*Beaucoup de soldats. Etês-vous Anglaise?*"

"*Non, madame, Americain.*"

"*Comment?*"

"*Americain.*"

"*Ah, oui.*"

In the quiet another shell exploded. The stone floor of the cellar trembled imperceptibly. As Bird and the old woman mounted the stairs, a last round of kidding followed them.

"Don't let her get runned over, Bird."

"You know these frog towns. Chock full of traffic."

"Don't let the skipper see you. You'll get jugged."

"Looks like an elopement, don't it?"

"Get back in time for breakfast, Lady."

"Help her up the curbs nice, now."

Connelly went to the top of the stairs and remained listening.

"I hope Lady don't have to go far," he said to the corporal below. "He's a good kid even if he is funny. He ain't tough enough. That's what's the matter with him. He ain't tough."

Two shells burst. Then another.

"Them babys is too frequent to please me," he continued. "It sounds like the openin' of some fireworks. We ought ta knowed better."

"Lady's just a plain —— fool, if you wanta ask me," said Morgan. "Traipsin' around this dump with a dame what can't hardly walk."

"He ain't hard-boiled," said Connelly. "You gotta be in this man's war."

The explosions in the town increased. After each roar the débris fell in an uneven heavy rain. The walls and floor of the cellar shook continuously.

"——," said Connelly. "I'm gonna look for him."

He settled his helmet and vanished into the dark. There was no more sleep for the platoon. They fussed in silence, smoking and eating what food they had. The corporal examined his wrist-watch with preoccupied attention. They heard Connelly's feet on the floor above, saw his legs enter the dim light on the upper stairs. He paused, hands on hips, gazing at the huddle of figures beneath him.

"FIND 'em?" said the corporal.

"Yea."

"Get to the first aid?"

"Yea."

"Where's Lady?"

"He's staying at the dressin'-station."

"What for?"

Connelly did not answer. In silence he sat down, resting his chin on his hands. A faint quiver passed along the cellar. The candle flame shuddered and then burned steadily. It was as if animate and lifeless things had drawn one long breath together.

"Say, Connelly," asked the corporal, "did he get bumped?"

"Sure," answered Connelly. "What the ——'d you think?"

A Bit of Chuting

A Complete Novelette

by Thomson Burtis

Author of "The Oily Bird," "Dumpy Ducks," etc.

IT LOOKED as though Chick Hawkins was dead. Wobbling through darkness so thick you could cut it with a knife, I finally made up my mind on that point. Half a mile below me the lights of the blooming city of Daysville made a splotch of white against the blackness of the ground, and almost in the center of the town Cook Field, bathed in searchlights for night-landing, looked small enough to be one of the squares of the village.

I, "Slim" Evans in person, was tired. It seemed as if I'd been flying night and day, and that the miles I'd covered looking for Chick and Whetstone, laid end to end, would have made the round-the-world flight look like a hop. They'd been gone three days, and from the Long Island Fields out to Cook, in Ohio, and Goddard, in Kentucky, the pilots of the Air Service had been searching for the men and the ship which seemed to have vanished from the earth.

I cut my roaring Liberty to a thousand revolutions, and started a gradual dive. As I jazzed the big twelve-cylindered motor occasionally to keep the plugs clean, the exhaust flame thickened and enlarged against the darkness. I took a look around to see whether any one else was as late as I was. Yes, some unlucky bozo was steaming in from the south. I hoped devoutly he'd see me. Two ships trying to land together on Cook Field are about like two trucks trying to get up an alley side by side.

In addition to weariness which made all the bones—and there are plenty—in my lanky body ache, I wasn't feeling so good. The fact that Whetstone, Chick's passenger, was a millionaire inventor who was valuable to the world in general and the Air Service in particular, wasn't cutting any ice with me. He was the bird that had kept the story on the front pages, but it was little Chick who was on my mind.

Not that he'd been any particular pal of mine, or not that flyers aren't expendable, and their demises to be taken for granted at intervals. It was just a matter of liking the little rooster, and of the circumstances under which I'd seen him just a few hours before he'd disappeared, and the annoying mystery of the whole thing. To a man with a mind as curious as mine, that unexplained element in the whole situation precluded forgetting the affair as casually as I would have ordinarily.

I was sliding down across the city now, a thousand feet high, and I came to the decision that I'd better quit mulling over the complete and total disappearance of an Army airplane, one flyer, and one inventor, and tend to my knitting. The exhausts of the other plane were close now, describing graceful circles in the air as the ship spiraled down.

I was O. K., I thought, on height and distance, so I gradually eased the Liberty down and shot for the flat white field ahead. A hundred yards back of it I had to give the ship the gun to drag it across the last few

trees, and then came down, for a wonder, on three points. My customary landings are a series of graceful leaps and bounds. I've made ten thousand of 'em in my seven years as an Army flyer, and done more bouncing than a kangaroo.

The other ship was coming in fast, so I got out of the way briskly. I taxied in to the line, where a considerable crowd was waiting, without losing any more time than the Twentieth Century when it's behind schedule.

Several dozen automobiles, headlights dimmed, and a hundred or so people. Field attachés, too—civilian mechanics, and a few officers. The townspeople, morbidly curious about the affair that was front page stuff all over the country, wanted to be right on the job if there was any news.

I sort of fell out of my ship, and before anybody could ask me anything I threw up my hands and shook my head, and then lit a cigaret.

They didn't really expect any news, I guess. It was the third day, and every inch of ground had been covered already.

A short figure detached itself from a group of officers and came striding importantly toward me. At least, that's the impression the man gave. He always did. Barkoni, it was—Whetstone's most prized assistant and adviser.

"Nothing at all?" he asked in his curious, precise way, standing stiffly rigid.

"Not a thing, Barkoni," I told him. "Same as before—not a trace. No news from anywhere else?"

He shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head. He was a curious chap, and I never had been able to figure out what he was. His bullet head, with its stiff blond hair cut in a brush pompadour, looked German, and many of his mannerisms pointed to the same thing. But, on the off paw, his eyes were dark, and they slanted upward slightly, and were narrow. Oriental looking. And he had what sounded like a spaghetti name. He was a foreigner of some sort, anyway, but his slow, precise English, while plainly difficult for him to get out without care, nevertheless gave no trace of an accent which you could spot.

"I'm afraid," I said casually, as I watched the other De Haviland come in to the line, "that your boss is going to be gone a long, long time."

"Yes, but my ——!"

He thrust up his hands, palm outward, as though unable to express all he wanted to say. His square, pink-and-white face was impassive, but his eyes gleamed and his flat, wide nose seemed to wrinkle with the effort of speech. Finally he jerked at his brush mustache, and succeeded in bringing a few words out.

"But if it was gone—killed—one could understand!" he said gutturally. "But this is—it is ununderstandable! We wake up one morning—Mister Whetstone's ship is damaged, while standing in the hangar! Then Lieutenant Hawkins take him to New York in an Army ship—and they never arrive! We never hear! We can not even see the ship, when it is not possible that they could get off course! We hear nothing from them. Is it not enough for a man to go crazy?"

He was getting excited, it appeared, which was unusual for him. In fact, Barkoni, although a stocky little martinet and forthright describer of all the faults he found with Government red tape, Air Service poverty, and general starved conditions in general, was nevertheless a lot better than many of the freaks who blew in and out of Cook Field with everything on their minds from combination flying machines and flivvers to perpetual motion motors for the Barling Bomber.

Barkoni rated about as much admiration around the field as a bow-legged girl at a beach, but Whetstone had described him as a genius—and if he was Whetstone's instrument man, we were bound to stand for him with a certain amount of courtesy.

"Yes, a man might be excused for going crazy!" I told him, meanwhile making sure that it was "Tex" MacDowell who was getting out of the other plane. "And, as you say, it's also peculiar that not a living soul on earth or over it appears to have seen or heard of the plane, and that we can't find it. I'm afraid, Barkoni, that said plane is just a black piece of metal under a tree somewhere in West Virginia or Pennsylvania or Kentucky—in the mountains—and that there isn't enough left of either one of 'em to see with a spy-glass.

"Well, I'm so tired I'm just crumpling up on my feet, so I'm going to check out and get some sleep. I—"

"Oh, hard-boiled, eh?" sneered Barkoni suddenly. "You try to act that you do not care! You are going to sleep!"

I stopped in surprize, and gave the instrument expert, standing as though a ramrod had been poked down his backbone, a good once over. Being six feet a little less than six inches myself, he came almost to my belt buckle. He could have hid behind one of my boots.

"Well, what of it?" I asked him wearily, and without any extraordinary courtesy.

Apparently he didn't know. Then I got a little ashamed of the way I'd yapped my last remark, so I said:

"Of course it's tough, Barkoni. Whetstone was a fine fellow and a great airplane engineer and inventor, and probably you thought a great deal of him. But if a man's going to fly—"

"No news, eh Slim?" came a voice from the other side of the ship, and wispy little "Goggles" Gray hove in sight.

He was a scientific sharp, detailed to the Air Service for special work on instruments.

"Not a thing," I told him. "I was just explaining to Barkoni here that—"

"I know, I know!" Barkoni burst forth. "But the disappearance! You Air Service make me sick. Pose—all pose. Gone? all right. But the mystery does not—stir you! It can not stimulate you into thinking, wondering, investigating—"

"Oh, apple sauce, and likewise potato butter!" interrupted little Goggles, his eyes snapping behind his huge rubber-tired glasses. "You're airing your opinions of the Air Service again, are you? Well, I, for one, am —— sick and tired of listening to 'em!"

Since the first day Barkoni had been on the field, he and Goggles, whose work brought him into contact with the visiting specialist, had carried on a feud. Nobody on the field liked Barkoni, to start with, and he drove inoffensive little Gray into spasms.

"Yes?" snapped Barkoni, his body seeming to get stiffer, if that's possible. "You should not take exception to what I say. You are not of the Air Service, despite those wings!"

Which showed every earmark of being a very nasty thrust, in any language. Goggles had got his wings, but his flying was a joke.

"Who asked your opinion?" snarled Gray, his frail body crouched a bit. "By ——, Barkoni, you listen to me! Giving you credit for feeling rotten about this lost ship, which we all do, I'm still telling you that I've stood all the personal insults from you I'm going to! You've done nothing but belittle me, personally, and professionally, since the first day I proved you made a mistake, and the next time you let a wrong word strain through that dinky mustache of yours I'm going to punch you right in that flat beak of yours!"

"Come on, Goggles, calm down," I told him. "Barkoni here's feeling badly—"

"Feeling bad ——!" snapped Gray. I'd never seen the quiet engineer so excited. "He's been doing the same thing ever since he's been around here. Shooting off his mouth—"

"So you will stop it for me, eh?" said Barkoni slowly, his almond eyes glowing like a cat's. "We shall see. And it is only fair to warn you, Lieutenant Gray, that I have never come out second best in combat. And that I shall continue to say and do exactly as pleases me!"

They were set for each other's throats, no doubt about that.

"Come on, Goggles," I said finally. "This is all foolishness. We're all quick on the trigger these days. Barkoni, let's all shut up. In fact, if you'd kept your mouth shut a little more around this field we'd all feel a little sorrier for you."

Whereupon I dragged Goggles off to the spot where Tex was giving his report. Goggles muttered a few things, finally grinned a farewell and then said:

"I swear I'll lay into that stuck-up ass before he leaves here, expert or no expert!"

I drifted over to the group surrounding Tex. The two of us hadn't been up from the border patrol down in Texas but a short time, and being two of the seven test pilots of the Army Air Service was still a bit of a kick to us. Down on the Border, we hadn't known, to all practical purposes, that there was an airplane in America outside of the superannuated De Havilands we flew. We'd read about seatpack parachutes, and that there were scout planes which really won Pulitzer races, and other things like that. But as far as we'd been concerned, they were all as real as Santa Claus. Now we were actually using 'em, and a lot of other new stuff, so it wasn't bad. Not that we didn't get homesick for Texas, either.

"Ready to go, Tex?" I asked him, and the big bronzed Texan nodded.

"If I can make it to the car," he drawled.

WE LEFT forthwith, before the pop-eyed populace could ask us more questions than the encyclopedia has answers for. Cook Field, the experimental field of the engineering division of the Army Air Service, has no quarters for officers or men, so Tex and I shared a palatial hutch in town.

"I guess this is in conclusion, finale and the end," I told him as I steered my battered roadster down the road between the great white sectional hangar on one side and the lofty white administration buildings on the other. "When they fell, they just about dug a hole deep enough to bury themselves in."

"Looks that way," nodded Tex. "Sort of tough for a youngster like Chick, too. He liked to fly better than I do to gamble. He asked for the trip, too, I hear."

"I'm sorry as —— about it," I told him. "And it hasn't got anything to do with the two hundred he owed me, either."

"By the way, that's something I found out just before I took off," the Texan said gently. "He had a note at the bank for two hundred. Sort of in a bad way financially, I guess."

We were rollicking down the road, alongside the trolley track, toward town, now, and Tex began to hum the old Border song entitled "Ten Thousand Dollars, Going to the Folks." Well, Chick's insurance would cover what he owed, anyway, but I, for one, wasn't going up to his father and put in a claim for my two hundred.

That was another tough thing about the situation. Flyers shouldn't have folks. He had a father—nice fellow of about forty-five—and he'd arrived at Cook the day before and was just about crazy.

"I understand there are some Federal men around—extra ones—looking into things," Tex said finally. "You know—how the tail surfaces of Whetstone's private Courier got broken, and why nobody seems to have seen the ship anywhere along the route to New York. I think myself some guard fell over Whetstone's ship in the hangar and was scared to 'fess up. I can't see that it necessarily has any connection with the disappearance of the Army ship and the two of 'em, unless they figure that somebody's out to get Whetstone."

"Spies of foreign governments and all that junk, huh?" I asked oratorically. "Well, Whetstone meant considerable to the Air Service at that."

And I wasn't exaggerating. His father had made more dollars than Ford does automobiles, back in the early days of cars, by inventing a lot of accessories for motors and cars in general. The son seemed to inherit the old man's genius, and he'd turned his attention to the air. He'd put out a very small ship, the Courier, with a little three-cylinder rotary motor, and the —— little mosquito was a darb. He flew all over in one, landing on roads and getting gas, and parking it in his own back yard. The ship looked like a toy, would go farther on a quart of gasoline than a flivver, land on a pocket-handkerchief and make around eighty miles an hour.

Then he put out a two-passenger, which he and Barkoni had flown to Cook in. They were there, working with Army men on improvements they'd worked out in the earth inductor compass, and likewise a new bomb sight. This compass was later used in the round-the-world flight—the principle of the things is utilizing the magnetic lines around the earth—and rumor had it that with the Whetstone-Barkoni improvements you could set a course from New York, go to sleep, and hit the Eiffel Tower dead center. Furthermore, the bomb sight, according to tests, resulted in the aerial egg hitting within fifteen yards of where it was aimed, from any height up to fifteen thousand feet. If the ship was a little off keel, or something else wrong so that it wouldn't hit where it was supposed to, the —— bomb wouldn't drop. Figure that one out. All you needed to give a man a Fourth of July treat with a bomb was to have his address, and then you could pick out any pocket you wanted to to drop it in.

Well, Whetstone's Courier had been found in the hangar the morning of his scheduled flying trip to New York, badly damaged. So Chick had been detailed to fly the wealthy young scientist into New York in an Army ship, had started—and now, as far as we could discover, he'd just gone straight up and kept on going, or gone down, and kept on going after he hit the ground.

As far as I was concerned, there was just enough mystery about the thing to keep me wondering. I was still thinking it over when we reached our three rooms and bath.

There were three good things about our domiciliary hovel—it had soft, shaded lights, a convenient shelf to use as a bar, and a beautiful spittoon.

"It seems to me," Tex announced in his soft, slurred Texas speech, "that little Chick rates the toast of the Border around midnight tonight. I reckon he's deceased. And before that time, we ought to quaff a tankard to Whetstone, who was a right good egg."

I agreed heartily. However, the midnight toast of the Border requires preparation, which we forthwith started to take with long, tall glasses in front of us. We didn't talk much. I was revolving the thing that wouldn't let me rest in my mind, thinking back, remembering the last time I'd seen Chick, which was the night before he'd dived off into nowhere.

IT WAS in Abe Katz's crap game, about eleven o'clock at night. I have somewhat of a weakness for the galloping dominoes, although no such fondness for 'em as for cards. However, action is fast, mental strain negligible and profits possible.

Chick used to patronize it occasionally, and when Tex and I strolled in, just to look things over and make a bet or two before going to bed, I wasn't surprized to see him crouched over the green table. He always gambled with more or less savage concentration, but this night he was going to it with particular verve, gusto and ferocity.

Abe ran a pretty fair kind of a game. It was a bare room up over a garage, with no furniture whatever except a very few chairs, stools for the bankers, and a billiard-table, with a six-inch side-wall around it, and the layout painted on its surface. A banker sat at each of the narrow ends of the table, with heaps of bills in front of him. The box man, who also acted as a banker in addition to watching the main bank-roll in the boxes, was enthroned in the center of one of the long sides, and opposite him was the stick man, standing, with his long curved stick to haul in the dice.

The house would "lay it or take it." That is, after a man had shot and got a point, you could bet he was right or wrong with the house, at conventional odds—three to two against nines and fives, two to one against tens and fours, and six to five against sixes and eights. If a man got a nine, for example, you could lay three against him, to the house's two, or you could plant your two dollars on the table, announce that you were "taking three," and thereby bet that he was right and get the same odds as you'd have had to give. Of course, where Abe's money came in was on the house cut. Bets will average over a long period, but the house cut of a nickel up to five dollars, a dime to ten, fifteen to fifteen and twenty to twenty and so on up meant much mazuma, brethren.

In the layout there were spaces for all kinds of freak bets—field, craps, seven, six and eight, don't pass, line, etc. But the general custom among the hard-boiled frequenters of a crap game is to wait until the shooter gets a point, and then lay that he's wrong, and will crap out.

I eased up close to the table, which was well crowded that night, and watched for a while. A man got a five, and I saw Chick count his money swiftly. His thin, eager face, with its short nose and well-cut, ever-smiling lips, was now drawn and a trifle pale. He must have been losing plenty, I remember thinking. But he was of the highly strung type which takes their gambling seriously at any time.

"Laying sixty!" he announced shrilly, and that just about took his bankroll. He only had a couple of dollars left.

I looked at him, about as surprized as I would have been to find Queen Victoria in the game. He was always a small better, as was in keeping with his income—and six to four on a five was about the biggest I'd ever seen him bet.

He watched the dice as the man shot, with a glitter in his eye and an expression on his face as though life itself depended on what they rolled. The shooter tried and tried and tried for his five, working fast. As they bounced off the sideboard and came to rest, the stick man announced the number, raked them in, shook them, fired them into the shooter's hand, and out they bounced again, with the stick man's dirge never ceasing:

"Nine, trying to five. Ten, trying to five. Craps, trying to five. Lots of field numbers coming out—who likes the field? Six, trying to five. Pay the six. Four, trying to five. Number—five!"

Chick had lost his sixty. His shoulders sort of slumped, and his ordinarily smiling, eager, boyish face was strained and old.

He watched the next shoot for a little while, clutching his pitiful bankroll. Finally he thrust it out on the field as the stick man was raking in the dice.

"Three on the field," he said, his voice breaking with excitement.

If craps, five, nine, ten or eleven came out on the next roll, he'd won at even money. But the shooter sevened.

He turned away from the table, shrugging his shoulders. But his blue eyes did not back up his nonchalance.

"Cleaned, eh?" I remarked.

He nodded. Suddenly he looked up at me in that quick, birdlike way he had. As always, his fine yellow hair was slickly combed and his dress neat and tidy, but his nerves were jumping, I could see.

"How about lending me two hundred, Slim. Can you?"

"I haven't got thirty bucks with me, Chick—"

"Abe'll cash your check, won't he?"

He was pleading, now, promising to give it back the first of the month and all that. Abe would cash my check—Army officers were a catered-to class in his clientele. Said clientele, I may say, was more than half thugs, cheap semi-pro gamblers and riffraff in general. Anyhow, I cashed the check and gave him the two hundred.

He was like a new man, almost hysterically eager. His eyes burned as he watched and waited for the next roll. A seven out, and the next shooter got a ten.

Chick was wedged in next to the box man—a tall, slender, hard-faced young Jew with sullen forehead and eyes.

The bets cracked down on all sides, until heaps of money fronted every banker. Hawkins, fumbling in his eagerness, croaked:—

"Lay a hundred!"

"That was going strong," I remarked to Tex. "But at that you might as well go fast."

We were standing directly behind Chick, watching his play. The very next roll was a seven. He'd won fifty.

I heard a sigh escape him, and he could barely wait to be paid off. The box man was rattling off his payments:

"Laying twelve to six. There you are. Twenty to ten. There you are. Taking twenty—you lose—laying ten to five—taking two hundred!"

And he picked up Chick's hundred.

"The —— I am!" snarled Chick. "I was laying a hundred to fifty!"

The box man whirled on him, his beady eyes hard and glittering.

"You said take two hundred!" he stated harshly. "I repeated the bet after you, and you didn't say a word!"

"You never repeated any bet!" yelped Chick, and he backed away from the tall houseman slightly. "Pay me my fifty, —— you—"

"No bet then!" snapped the Jew.

That's one of the reasons a house man gets paid ten dollars a day. In the course of a night he can wriggle out of many a losing bet on various pleas, and pay off a winning bet on field or six or something so late the winner doesn't have a chance to get it off before the next roll, giving the house a chance to recoup, and various other dodges. Stick man and bankers working together can clean up, or save the house, hundreds in a big night's play.

"No bet ——!" shouted Chick, his slender body quivering.

"Gendelman!" wheezed fat old Katz.

"Pay me my fifty!" yelled Chick again.

I was just about to put in my oar when the box man said:

"I'll pay you nothing! Announce your bets right—"

He never finished his address, or even his sentence. Little Chick leaped forward as though his body was a rubber ball that had been hit by Babe Ruth from a toe-hold. His fist crashed into the sneering box man's face, the other hand, a split-second later, was wrapped around his neck, and Chick was clinging to him, and battering his face, like a pup on a polar bear.

The impetus of that onslaught knocked the house man back. He staggered, and the packed customers on the other side scrambled away. A second when the house man strove to fight him off, as his three co-workers leaped to their feet and started around, and then the Jew went to the floor, Chick on top.

I was flying in a bad storm. It had been too sudden, and my lumber-wagon brain was several miles back of this speedster action. Chick's attack had been so sudden, so savage, that he seemed like a madman.

There on the floor, for a second, he beat the Jew's face with his fist, and his own keen countenance was distorted into a wolfish snarl. The players were milling for a good look, shouting as they did so, and the house men were fighting their way

through. Above all Abe pleaded for silence.

"Gendelmen, gendelmen, pleas'—"

Then the house man, his nose bleeding and his opaque black eyes murderous, threw his thirty-pounds-lighter antagonist off, and leaped to his feet. Chick was up like a rubber ball, only to be knocked down like a vase off a shelf. He came up again, staggering—but I was in front of him and Tex was meeting the onslaught of the stick man and banker.

"That's enough!" I shouted. "Get back, you! Serves you right for trying to get away with a bet—"

Hawkins hurled himself in from the side, and in a second I was tearing them apart. I hurled the little flyer back to the wall.

"Stay there, you crazy banty rooster!" I snapped at him, and turned to confront the Jew, who was now holding his nose and trying to stop the blood. Tex, a couple of feet to the left of the Jew and I, a leaping flame of pure joy in battle in his gray eyes, was warning the two house men to stay where they were. The crowd had jammed back, leaving us in a cleared space alongside the table.

Somehow, as I whirled on that tall, sullen box man, I was as taut in every nerve as though there were guns showing. Something in Chick's crazed outburst, plus the cold calculation of the attempted steal against a heavy loser, gave me mingled premonitions and feelings of disgust that made it vitally necessary for me to relieve myself by taking a hand.

"Now listen, you crook!" I told him—and you could have hung your hat on the silence. "I saw that whole deal, and Chick is right. Furthermore, I've watched and played in this game a long time, and I know that when you think you can get away with it you're nothing but a common, ordinary thief! The whole —— bunch of you, for that matter. You're too —— wise to pick on anybody big enough to stand up for themselves, but give you all the aces in the deck up your sleeve and you'll play 'em plenty.

"Listen here, Abe!" and I turned around toward the fat, perspiring Jew. "That fifty is going to be paid Chick here, or I'll call up every flyer in town and we'll wreck your —— joint. Do you get that? And I hope you call my hand! Your game is square, but your men are a bunch of crooks —and so are you, for that matter, for letting 'em do it! Speak up, now—is that bet going to be paid? You know me—and I tell you it's right!"

And I meant every word. I was standing, slightly crouched and ready for anything, and I was never more sincere in my life. The box man's eyes were narrowed and vicious, but he said nothing.

Abe licked his lips. To pay the bet would be an admission—

"Where do they get away with that stuff? Throw 'em out! They—"

It was a squat Italian banker, but he got no further. Tex MacDowell's open hand smacked his mouth so hard the echo reverberated from the ceiling.

"When're you aiming to start, mister?" inquired the six-foot Southerner softly, and I guess the guy didn't know, because he didn't say.

He held his mouth, and his face was ferocious, but Tex had him buffaloed.

Utter quiet for several seconds, and then Abe made up his mind. His fat, hairy neck was wet with perspiration, and his collarless shirt soaked. He drew his bloated body up, and his fleshy, dark face seemed to relax.

"Da bed will be paid," he said pompously. "Bud I musd inzizt dot vat my box man says I take—alvays. In dese case, I pay de bed. Id is a misunderstanding—maybe a misdake on both parts. Bud hereafder, gendlemen, you must have de beds understood thoroughly!"

That seemed to fix matters up, and I sort of relaxed. But Chick, against the wall there, wasn't through. It was a total surprize to me—the little flyer was utterly beside himself.

In the second of silence just before he started his speech, I noticed with a sort of subconscious surprize that Barkoni was there. Faces were shadowed, because the only illumination came from low-hanging lights with dark shades, and I hadn't noticed him before. Immaculately dressed, his thick brown brush of hair standing stiffly, and his eerie eyes glinting a bit, he stood rigidly, pulling at his mustache and watching. Hot place for an instrument expert, I remember thinking.

"Before this game starts, I've got something to say!"

It was Chick, and he pushed by me and took the center of the stage, facing the Jew he'd punched in the nose.

"That stuff of yours sounds all right, Abe,

but by —— I've just got wise to what a sucker I've been in this joint. I can think of a dozen bets I let go, because they were small or I was ahead or something, without arguing with the bankers when I knew I was right. And most of 'em have been with you, you crooked, small-time thief!"

He was getting excited again. His vivacious, sparkling face didn't show either of those two desirable qualities right then—it was as pale as milk, except for two red splotches on his cheeks. I stood beside him, my eyes darting around to watch developments. I was almost as sore as he was, and I figured he ought to say his say. If he was going to gamble there, he might as well have a show-down.

"I'm just telling you one more thing, mister," he blazed suddenly, and he stuck his face right in front of the house man's. "If I hadn't happened to have friends here, you'd have got away with that hundred tonight, wouldn't you? Throw me out, if necessary! Well, just try it again, and I'll cut your —— heart out! I'll—"

And he went on, and it wasn't pretty, and it wasn't exactly right. He was a quivering madman, feeding the flame of his own wild fury with every word. The crowd was silent and uneasy, and I'll give you my word that this big crook he was talking to shrank before the maniacal gleam in his eyes. And he took some of the most savage vituperation a man ever stood for.

It was terrible—it made me writhe like a snake with a pronged stick over its neck. Then Tex relieved me of doing it.

"Come on, Chick, dry up!" he snapped at the crazy youngster.

But Hawkins shrugged his hand off his shoulder. He hadn't said three more words before Tex yanked him right off his feet.

"I said shut up, you —— little fool! Button up your mouth — you've said enough!"

And he had, and suddenly he realized it. One more defiant look at the murderous Jew, a quick glance at Tex and I, and he relapsed into silence, his chest heaving.

"Let's play," he said more quietly, and went to the table.

He'd more or less lost the sympathy of the crowd, I think, but they were interested, puzzled, and slightly uncomfortable. Play was silent and fast, and most of the time about three-quarters of the eyes were on the pale, strained young flyer.

Barkoni said nothing, and gave no sign of interest. He watched the dice impassively, occasionally, with great pomposity, laying a bet and making triply sure that it was understood by all. He announced it as frequently as an auto firm does new nodels.

Chick lasted just ten tense minutes. He was betting wildly—large amounts. He won two or three, but finally, on a four, he laid a hundred and fifty to seventy five—and lost. He was cleaned.

He stood beside the table a moment, while his enemy, the box man, glanced triumphantly at him. The game went on. Just a little while he stood there, and then turned away and walked out.

I didn't know quite what to do. I was going to make a few bets myself when there was room. But for some reason I followed him out. I didn't catch him, though. By the time I'd lit a cigaret and got to the door he was on his way up the silent street in his car, going like a house afire.

For the next hour or two I thought about it. Young, smart as a whip, a more or less on edge sort of a bird who was a reckless flying genius, a lot of fun and good company, and universally popular—had gambling got the best of him? Maybe the strain of it was hard on his high-strung system. However, I more less forgot it. Men act funny when they're losing—or winning either. You can tell it on most of 'em. But he'd been like a man with his back to the wall, fighting the whole world in hopeless desperation.

Anyhow, the next day Whetstone was to go to New York, and Chick piloted him, and ship and men simply disappeared from the face of the earth. Now the papers were full of the mystery, and his stout, pleasant-faced father was a wreck, and Tex and I were sitting there in our ancestral hut, preparing to drink the last toast to a flying man.

"Tex," I spoke out suddenly as midnight neared and, due to the heat, myriad drops of gin were decorating my forehead, "I wonder if the shape we saw Chick in that last night, plus, probably, very little sleep, got him in shape where he just pulled a boner and crumpled the works?"

"If flyers didn't do that occasionally, they wouldn't have flight surgeons and examinations, Professor," Tex stated weightily. "I've been wondering a little about that myself."

We relapsed into silence again, and something—some possibility—that I couldn't quite define kept knocking at the door of my mind. That's where most ideas and facts stop with me—outside. I couldn't get my mental false teeth into the thing I wanted to, some way. It just buzzed around in the back of my head.

But it was enough to make me restive, and to generate a sort of vague mixture of hope and fear. I wasn't quite sincere as we staggered to our feet at midnight, and, weaving gently and gracefully, like two palm trees in the wind, drank the midnight toast of the Border patrol to the memory of Chick Hawkins:

> Here's to the sands of the hour-glass,
> Measuring time as it flies;
> Here's to the man gone West today
> And here's to the next man that dies.

NEXT morning, on our way to the hashery where we were accustomed to make heavy inroads on their stock of eggs and coffee before punching the time-clock out at the field, Tex and I invested, as likewise was our extravagant custom, in a newspaper apiece.

Two minds dribbling along in the same ditch described us exactly. Our eyes fell on the same one-column head, and we read it together. Briefly, it narrated the fact that a West Virginia mountaineer, whose cabin was several miles from the next nearest habitation, had observed an airplane go down below the level of the trees at approximately three-thirty, according to the sun, and rise again three or four hours later on the day the pair of flyers had disappeared. He'd happened to make the long trek into the nearest town the day before, and the information had come from him casually. He hadn't thought anything about it. Airplanes over the mountains, on and adjacent to the airway between Daysville, Moundsville and New York, were frequent. Furthermore, he didn't know anything about lost flyers, for two reasons: He got to this settlement, where it was a wonder they knew much about it, infrequently, and he didn't see a newspaper at all, because he couldn't read.

At first Tex and I were inclined to be jubilant, and then I brought us both down to earth by saying:

"It simply narrows the search to the stretch of mountains between this Carrville and New York—which we've been searching anyway. It's considerably off-course, at that. Furthermore, it makes their deaths seem more certain, because if they started off at that hour it fell dark almost immediately, and they were ding-donging along at night. Probably a forced landing over some remote woods, spiraling down with a dead motor at night, unseen; then fire that consumed everything, or else the ship fell in some ravine or something in such a way that it can't be seen from the air."

Tex nodded.

"The only help this gives is to make it possible to go over every inch of that territory, instead of spreading out. And it might be another ship, at that, but that can soon be found out."

Out at the field there was a little hope, but not much. Wires were already dispatched to all fields within a thousand miles, asking whether one of their ships had made a forced landing in that locality. If not, of course, a batch of flyers would comb this much smaller area with a fine-tooth comb. Chick would have certainly pointed east from his field, so it cut off the whole stretch between Daysville and this first ridge of West Virginia and Pennsylvania mountains.

I went into the huge sectional hangar—a vast, lofty structure which bordered the field on its northern edge and housed many dozen ships of all types, and up the steps to the second floor, which was divided into a lot of offices. In the operations room of the flying section I saw Mr. Hawkins—and hated to.

He was just about pleading with Johnny Redding, officer in charge of flying, which means chief test pilot of the Army Air Service. His plea was for confirmation of his own hopes, and the little Scotch pilot was giving it to him. Nevertheless, there was relief on his face when Mr. Hawkins spotted me and made a dive for me.

"It means they're lost in the mountains, don't you think so?" the half-crazed father asked me excitedly. "And landing in the trees isn't necessarily fatal, is it?"

"No indeed," I assured him, as I had a hundred times before. "It's good news, all right. It shows that it was a forced landing, probably, and not a real fall, and it means we can scrape every inch of ground and find 'em. Probably they were both hurt a little,

and are holing up in some mountain cabin until they're in shape to get to civilization."

"That's what I think!"

Usually, I guess, Mr. Hawkins was just a stout, full-faced, bald-headed business man whose nose-glasses gave him distinction. Now the fat hung in folds on his face, and his eyes were like haunted things peering from somewhere back in his head. He hadn't even shaved—the paper had caused him to rush out to the field half-dressed. He made the field remember the tragedy every minute of the time—a grieving ghost around the airdrome.

He hopped off to headquarters to await any answers from the telegrams, and I cocked a snook at the flying schedule for the day. I had it pretty easy—I was to fly a Curtin monoplane with some new streamlining over the speed course to see what she'd do, and then test out some minor changes in the metal, reversible-pitch prop they were working with. This was an all metal prop which could be changed, in pitch, while in flight. Blades set at a large angle when climbing, reduced when in level flight for greater speeed, and put in absolute neutral for landing, so that the idling prop wouldn't pull the ship ahead in the slightest. As a finale, you could put it at a negative angle, after being safely on the ground, which acted as a brake.

These jobs would take less than a half hour apiece, and I was to top off with a stability test on a new model scout which the Dougal factory had just submitted to the Government.

"Hey, Slim!" yelled Redding from his office. "C'mere a minute."

He's the bird that's spent most of his flying life at least five miles above the ground. He holds all the altitude records there are, and is so used to sucking on an oxygen tank and wearing eight suits of clothes that he's uncomfortable on the ground. He's a small, rugged-looking fellow of thirty-odd, with gray hair in his short brown pompadour.

"What's Barkoni got against your flying?" he inquired, with a tight-lipped smile.

"Huh? Nothing, that I know of. I never carried him. And so far I haven't littered your field with any wrecks, have I?"

"Nope. But he nearly went nuts when I assigned you on that New York trip—the fog test, you know. You want a trip to N. Y., you said, and Barkoni's got to take it, too, now that poor Whetstone's gone. The human statue hates flying like poison, anyway, but he surprized me when he refused to fly with you."

I sat down on a chair, in considerable surprize. In fact, I was astonished. I've been a flyer for seven years, and furthermore, duty as a test pilot at Cook is supposed to be a reward for "unusually faithful and meritorious flying service." I'm not decorating myself with the Legion of Honor, with pineapples—but I'm not taking any razzberries, either. In other words, after nearly two thousand hours in the air, I saw no reason for any one to actually run down my airmanship.

"That's a —— of a note—that little ground squirt trying to knock me out of my chance to see the old town for the first time in years—and free! And I can't understand it—maybe I can, too. Does he know I want to go badly?"

"He does now, because I told him. But he didn't when he kicked first."

"I had a little run-in with him because I wasn't sobbing over Whetstone last night. Thought it might be a personal prejudice—"

"On the contrary," grinned Redding. "He informed me that he has the highest regard for you personally, that your record as a border patrolman is such that he respects you greatly, and that you are, without doubt, a cultivated gentleman and an efficient officer. However, as a flyer, you are sour apples and a stench in the nostrils of Mr. Hubert Von Adam Barkoni!"

"Well I'll be —— ," I said feelingly. I was somewhat surprized, and not a little sore. Partly vanity, I suppose, but a lot of it was that I wanted to get to New York, after years in Texas, and give a few shows the once-over and see whether any of my old telephone numbers were still good.

"Anybody that can understand General Nuisance," Redding went on, "could tell what the weather's going to be in Patagonia on Christmas day. Who do you think he wants as pilot?"

"Search me."

"Goggles Gray!"

"Are you kidding me?" I inquired, fixing upon him a keen and glittering eye. "I thought those two hated each other like rattlesnakes. And if Barkoni thinks Goggles is a good flyer, he's just paid me the compliment of my flying career by saying I'm punk!"

Which was, if anything, an understatement. Goggles wasn't a test pilot—he was from the engineers, and had just got his wings. As I mentioned before, he was a scientific bird, doing some work on instruments himself, and he and Barkoni had fought acrimoniously since the first day Barkoni had started to tell the Air Service what to do and when to do it, and air his opinions of America in general and the Army in particular and the flying corps in particular particular.

And fly! If destroying American ships makes a German ace, Goggles had Richtofen stopped a mile. He couldn't fly, knew it, and after getting his wings, finally, settled down to ten flights a month around the field in a Jenny. He wasn't even in the Air Service as a flyer—he was on detail because he was an engineering sharp with ideas for the flying corps.

He was a little goofy, like most of these birds who are carrying a heavy load of assorted intellect.

"Why," I went on dizzily, "those two have locked horns more times than Goggles has crashed a ship. Didn't Goggles announce that he was going to punch Barkoni's nose if Barky handed out another insult about his professional ability? I heard him, last night."

"He did?" chortled Redding. "You can't figure Barkoni. Picking his pet enemy and the worst flyer around the joint! On the other hand, listen to this. It appears, by and large, as though poor Chick was in pretty bad financial shape. Barkoni showed me an I.O.U. for five hundred bucks this morning—from Chick."

Funny thing, but that gave me pause, as they say. That annoying knocking at my mental door got louder. I was jumping around like a leaping tuna, trying to get my paws on something that turned out to be thin air when I thought I had it.

"I'm going to step around and have a little chat with Barky," I announced.

Which I did. And the main reason why I did was to find out the reason for his aspersions on my flying ability, I suppose. Any man has some vanity, even a gangling, uneducated, more or less dumb sod-buster from a ranch in the wide open places, like myself. The main thing, though, was that I was doing so much wondering that I needed action.

I found Barkoni in his office, poring over some drawings on a table. He pulled his usual stuff—didn't even look up when I went in. Dressed in blue serge, as always, a pair of rimless glasses attached to his short, thick nose, and bending stiffly from the waist—he never varied in appearance or rasping manner.

"Thought I'd drop in and find out whether it would really scare you to death to have me fly that fog-instrument test to New York," I began after he'd grunted a churlish greeting. "I've got a special and particular reason for wanting to go."

He was standing at rigid attention, so to speak, waiting loftily to see what I had to say.

"Is it not permitted for one who has to fly to select his pilot?" he inquired precisely. "If one can not be forced to fly unless he wishes so to do, it would seem that he should likewise—"

"I'm not arguing that point," I told the little martinet. "But I want to go. Redding says you don't want me to fly you because you think I'm a rotten pilot. That's all right, too. But I'd like to know why—"

"It is unnecessary for me to explain my opinions," he said, and, as usual, the contemptuous touch in manner and voice infuriated me—as it did everybody else on the field.

"Well," I lied to try him out, "I'm going to be your pilot, regardless, if I want to. And I do."

I said that because, the more I thought of it, the more I knew that the reason behind his objection to me was something besides flying. And likewise, in my wobbling mental state, I felt that the Goggles matter brought on more talk.

If possible, he stiffened still further, and his cold gray eyes shone with hard brightness.

"It is impossible!" he said furiously. "This dictation from your authorities I will not take! I will not go at all! I will leave the development of this instrument—I will take it with me! If Mr. Whetstone is dead—God forbid!—it is mine, and I will take it. Some other government I shall—"

"Oh, apple sauce," I told him, and now that I was getting his goat I kept right on. "You want Gray, do you? For what reason? He don't even want to go—doesn't want to fly away from the field! The flying department, Mr. Barkoni, require an explanation of your peculiar tastes before they assign an outside pilot to you, break

their ordinary method of assignment, and above all, intrust yourself, a ship, and the instruments to a man who really isn't a pilot at all! And furthermore, we think the whole thing is —— funny!"

He stood there, his eyes boring into me like a couple of brace bits. I could fairly feel the fury he was restraining behind that iron exterior. Talking like that to him, ordinarily, would have provoked an outburst of cold, contemptuous words which would infer that he wasn't to be worried by the dust under his feet.

I glared back. An imitation glare. I was really just wondering, and the fact that he rubbed my hair the wrong way had nothing to do with it right then.

There we stood, me leaning against his table and him standing like a man of iron, one hand at his side, the other behind his back—and the fist I could see was clenched until the knuckles were white.

"Why don't you take one of the other regular flyers?" I demanded. "Why, this field wouldn't let Gray go out on a trip like that!"

"No-o?"

He threw back his head, and his narrowed, Oriental eyes surveyed me with withering scorn.

Just for a moment. Then, as surprizing as though the floor had suddenly given way beneath me, he seemed to melt.

"Perhaps I was foolish in regard to Lieutenant Gray," he said stiffly, but with the hint of a wintry smile on his full lips. "He and I do not agree—eh? I thought perhaps it would make our feelings more kindly. You want to go?"

He shrugged his shoulders, and a devil seemed peeping from his eyes—a sort of mischievous devil.

"I do not like to fly. Wild horses could not pull me into an airplane were it not necessary. I fly with Mr. Whetstone—yes. He was my commander. But his ship was slow and safe. I do not think you are the type for this flying we must do. It did not occur to me that flying blinded in a front cabin would be a pleasure to anybody. But if I must go, and you must go—"

He shrugged his shoulders again.

"You may go," he said, as though conferring a reward on a slave.

"Thanks," I answered sardonically, aware of a desire to watch my fist and his nose in a head-on collision.

Other words were on the tip of my tongue —his loan to Chick, and his presence at the crap game, but I withheld them. I turned to leave and got as far as the door, when I looked back, my mouth open preparatory to speech.

He was standing there looking at me—he hadn't moved. And there was an unreadable look in his eyes—something that might have been hatred, or possibly fear. It was unusual, anyway, and it gave me a shock. Such a shock, that when I spoke the words tumbled over themselves awkwardly.

"Er—you know about the ship being seen in a field, don't you?" I asked him. "Narrows down the search, but it's a cinch they crashed in the dark, I guess."

He glanced over at his papers, and then his eyes found the floor.

"They are dead," he said evenly. "The young Hawkins—it is too bad. But Mr. Whetstone—it is a tragedy! Not that he was rich and happy, but that such a mind should be lost to the world!"

I nodded, and went out. And if you think I was dreaming, you're crazy. I'd worked myself, for some unknown reason, into a frame of mind where I found something suspicious and mystifying under every blade of grass, and was reading sinister meanings into every word. Starting with a coincidence like the wrecking of Whetstone's Courier and the disappearance of the inventor, up through the facts of the total disappearance of the ship and Chick's parlous financial condition, right to the events of this very morning—they all spelled a word I couldn't quite get the meaning of.

Why had Barkoni objected to my flying him, and suggested his enemy, the most unreliable and unsafe pilot on the field—when he was scared of flying to start with? And why had he reversed himself in his talk with me? Said first that he thought it would make Goggles Gray and himself better friends, and then say that the trip would not be a pleasure to anybody?

Which, of course, it wouldn't. It meant the pilot's flying in a cockpit that was completely covered, and lighted only by one electric light. The idea was, of course, to prove that a man could hit New York, flying in fog so thick he couldn't see the tips of his wings. That new compass, plus inclinometers and levels to aid the pilot in keeping the ship level, was supposed to do the trick. That wasn't a pleasant prospect

—unless one wanted to get to New York by any means whatever.

But for a moment there Barkoni had floundered. And I and my Diamond Dick mind had it figured out that there was something behind his unexplainable attitude on that trip which no one but himself knew anything about.

The day brought forth a couple of developments. That ship which had been seen was unquestionably the Dougal observation plane in which the two missing men had been flying; an apologetic automobile man appeared at the field and proved that Chick's monthly instalments on his car had been unpaid for two months; and a little private trip of my own, to Abe Katz's African golf course, brought to light the fact that Chick had lost heavily, and that quite frequently Barkoni had come with him, and lent him money.

Somehow or other the coming fog test, which was scheduled for three days ahead, assumed gradually the dimensions of an interesting ride. I couldn't have told for the life of me what I thought or what I expected—I was just living in an imaginary world, I guess, cuckoo as they make 'em.

Then, the morning of the day following my little *conversazione* with Barkoni, it broke, and gave the afternoon papers from New York to California new fodder for their front pages.

I HAPPENED to be in the adjutant's office to hand in an explanation "by endorsement hereon" as to why I'd been late for work a few days before. My explanation did not include the fact that the morning in question followed my birthday closely, and that the Army was lucky I'd been able to get out of bed at all.

I'd just turned from the desk when Barkoni burst through the door like a human cannon-ball. He was waving a letter, and his hard shell had cracked widely and in various places. His slanting, half-Oriental eyes were aglow, and his mouth open.

"They are alive!" he yapped in wild excitement. "I have here a letter. Kidnaped — but safe! I must see the Major—"

No such items as being announced, or revering the sanctity of the C. O.'s office, were in vogue right then. Sam Jardine, the adjutant, and I, galloped right in behind the steaming foreigner.

"They are alive— Whetstone and Hawkins!" he was babbling. "But read, Major —read them! That one is from Mr. Whetstone—I would know if I saw his hand a thousand years from now!"

Major Burton leaped to his feet, and the gold leaves on his shoulders waved as his eye darted over the first letter. He dropped it to the desk as he breathed, "Well I'll be ——!" and started on the second.

It didn't take me a second to grab it, and Sam and I read it. It was from Whetstone, handwritten in pencil, and said:

Dear Hubert:—

I am writing to my wife at the same time. Both of you do exactly what these bandits say. $100,000 is high, but life is worth more, and I won't starve to death, anyhow. They mean business, and if there's any slip up Hawkins and I will be gone goslings. I can not make it too strong. Conditions are such that, at present at least, they have us right where they want us, and any effort on anybody's part to work the double cross on them will simply result in our death. They are quite remarkable criminals. I wish I could say more. I am well, but Hawkins, in fighting them at first, got battered pretty badly. However, nothing serious, and he's all right.

Again I say to every one: do what they say until we are free.

WILLIAM WHETSTONE.

P.S. — To convince you of the absolute authenticity of this note, here are data on our compass—

And it went on into technical formulæ and stuff like that. That, of course, was to assure Barkoni that the letter was not a forgery.

Whetstone's right hand man was babbling to the atmosphere while everybody else was reading, and paying absolutely no attention to him. The Major's eyes popped out so far I could have knocked them off with a stick as he sank back in his chair and devoured the second, and much longer, letter.

Then Sam and Barkoni entered into an excited conversation, while I took a look at the envelope. It was plain white, and had been mailed the day before from Chicago. Chicago was a long way from the place where they must have gone down—

The Major dropped the letter and reached for the phone. I didn't even let it hit the desk. I was subconsciously aware that he was instructing the operator to call his heads of departments to his office immediately, and to connect him with the telegraph office.

Then I read the letter. I append a copy

of the somewhat remarkable communication:

Chicago, Illinois,
August 3rd, 1923.

Mr. Hubert Barkoni,
Cook Field, Daysville, Ohio.

Dear Mr. Barkoni:—

Enclosed herewith is a short note from your employer, Mr. Whetstone, which will convince you of the truth and importance of what we bring to your attention here.

Through a fortunate accident, Mr. Whetstone and Lieutenant Hawkins fell into our hands. We are holding them for a ransom of $100,000—surely an insignificant sum for a multi-millionaire scientist who is worth far more than that to himself, and whose value to the world at large is incalculable. We are communicating with both yourself and Mrs. Whetstone. Your fortunes are more or less bound up in his living, we understand, and of course Mrs. Whetstone has a personal interest in the matter beyond that of any one else. We communicate with you two because your tendency will be, we feel sure, to do everything in your power to release our prisoners in safety, and will be less likely to chance their welfare by attempting to capture us before the payment of the ransom.

Their airplane was almost totally demolished in landing, although they were unhurt, and we promptly took steps to see that it was thoroughly destroyed, and the metal parts buried, so that finding it would be impossible. Furthermore, we transported our prisoners a considerable distance from the scene of the disaster, and they are secreted in such a manner that finding them, we are confident, will be absolutely impossible. We will, out of the goodness of our hearts, give you the tip that they are not in Chicago.

Your method of procedure will be as follows, if you and Mrs. Whetstone desire to see Mr. Whetstone alive again. Lieutenant Hawkins we will, being of generous and philanthropic dispositions, throw in free:

By telephone and telegraph it will take but a short time to find out whether Mrs. Whetstone accedes to the expressed desire of her husband, and places $100,000 in cash available to ransom him. Doubtless she will do this, as no rumors of marital unhappiness have ever been bruited about concerning this charming and prominent couple.

This being decided, she will arrange the transfer of the money to make it available to you in Daysville. You, then, in person, will have the $100,000 at your disposal. We take it for granted that this will be arranged by noon of August 5th.

Within a few days of that time, you will receive a letter, carefully timed so that its exact hour of arrival will be known to us. This letter will contain detailed instructions as to the course you, with a pilot, shall fly from Cook Field, with the $100,000, in cash, and packed so that it may be dropped in safety from a low altitude. On this course which will be designated, a signal, which will also be explained in the following letter, will inform you exactly where to descend until you are as low as you can get, thereupon flying across the signal and dropping the money as close to it as possible.

We may state that where the money is dropped will have no relation whatever to where the prisoners are incarcerated, but, you may be assured, will be a considerable distance therefrom. However, forty-eight hours after the money is dropped, providing no mistakes are made on your side, information will be furnished by mail to persons who can readily reach the prisoners and release them. Being kind-hearted, and, we flatter ourselves, gentlemen, we pledge you our words that (1) the prisoners will not suffer, although by themselves, during that forty-eight hours, and that (2) we will absolutely live up to our agreement in every respect—if you do.

A few words, Mr. Barkoni, of general advice. First, we will unhesitatingly kill both prisoners (1) if the money is not forthcoming on schedule, or (2) if any attempt whatever is made to apprehend us before the money is forthcoming. We would advise:

(1) Having a ship, in excellent condition, and ready to leave as a moment's notice, always available. When you receive the second letter, time will be accurately estimated, and if you are more than one half hour late you might just as well never start.

(2) If another airplane is even in the air, within the vision of powerful glasses in the hands of an observer, when the money is dropped the fate of the two prisoners is sealed.

(3) The ship in which you come must absolutely follow the detailed instructions in the second letter in every respect. Any idea on your part that aerial machine guns, or anything of the sort, will aid you, is erroneous. Every detail has been covered by us, and there is no way in which you can successfully consummate this matter if you try any underhanded methods whatever.

In closing, it is only fair to point out that any deviation from the procedure we lay down will simply be murder, on your part, as surely as the killing of our prisoners will be the same on ours. After we have the money, try to apprehend us—that's all in the game. We will also state that every possible method of capturing us before the release of the prisoners has been foreseen by us. For example, you might think that covering the territory surrounding the spot where the money is dropped, shortly after it is dropped, by airplane would help you. It will not. Other plans will be equally fruitless. Furthermore, we are not known criminals, no one of us, if captured, will turn state's evidence, and this crime was not planned in advance.

The miraculous manner in which our prisoners fell into our hands is truly an illustration of the fact that manna from God does come out of the air, and that the Lord looks after his own when they are in trouble.

One further remark. It would be wise for the airplane you prepare to leave at a moment's notice be one of large gas capacity, capable of a trip up to five hundred miles without running out of fuel.

BY THE time I'd finished this epistle, the adjutant's office was a seething mob of men, and the department heads were flocking into the C.O.'s cubby-hole. I had to beat it, and I got out of the mob and went outside to think it over.

That letter was certainly a darb, I thought. The —— thugs were kidding us! It had been written on a typewriter—apparently a new one—and surely the one who

had penned the screed was not an ignorant, uneducated, ordinary yegg.

One line stuck out from the first note—the one from Whetstone—like the Washington monument in a graveyard, as far as I was concerned. That was the little reference to the fact that Chick Hawkins had fought so hard he'd been hurt.

There was a possibility that some smart crook—or possibly a man who'd never been a crook before—had just happened to be hiding in the mountains, or was there for some reason, and found out, after the wreck, who Whetstone was, thereupon seizing opportunity right by the Adam's apple. Possibly a few mountaineers were in on it—there are always a certain percentage of those hillbillies who hate everything to do with the Government, and not a few of 'em have popped off a revenue officer or two in their day. And not a few flyers, down in the mountains, had had tough time getting away.

That was an excited field, for the next two days, and to go even further, this was an excited country, for that matter. The newspapers didn't like the story much—just about the whole front page's worth the first day—and the suspense until their rescue was helpful in keeping a considerable portion of the world interested, due to Whetstone's prominence.

And Mr. Hawkins! Say, that fond father babbled along like a happy kid. He was sure everything would be all right, and offered every dime he possessed if Mrs. Whetstone didn't come through.

But, of course, she did. And due to her pleading, partly, and Mr. Hawkins', and the general judgment of the Government agents, it was decided to go through with the scheme as the crooks had planned it. All possible arrangements for landing them later were made—warnings flashed to every hamlet within a thousand miles of Cook to have every able-bodied man ready to join posses thrown out to get the man or men who would receive that money.

And I was assigned as the pilot, after a talk with Redding. Barkoni didn't kick. He was too happy to kick. He didn't do a tap of work—in fact, nobody on the field did. We spent most of our time waiting for the next mail to come in. Federal agents were working, and getting nowhere.

Major Burton and his staff went into conference with me, and after it had been arranged that I radio the news back as soon as I'd dropped the money, the key of the set was to be transferred into the front cockpit of the big Dougal I was to fly, so that I could use it. Immediately ships from Cook, Mitchell Field, and Goddard were to concentrate in that territory, establishing a base on some good pasture lot, and that territory was to be scanned for any signs of life whatever. Likewise, a cordon thrown around it on the ground. We didn't know where it would be, of course, but the fields in Michigan and Illinois were ready, as well as others as far as Langham in Virginia.

"I can't see," I told the assembled officers, "how the bird that picks up the jack figures on getting away. That may be the point where their deep-laid plot's gone wrong, although the letter shows they thought of it."

"Maybe they're going to dive into the mountains, and just hole up for months," stated Grady, one of the Federal men. "They're smart, all right. And them mountains, if that's where they are, can hold a fugitive for years and him not discovered except by accident. Of course, Mr. Whetstone and the lieutenant may give us clews that'll make it easy.

"Funny thing. Luck of the ——, them landin' right into the hands of men that'd pull this stunt."

It certainly was—very funny. But then, I presume life is largely made up of accidents, when you come to think of it. Slip on a banana peel when you're eight years old and the result is you're a millionaire when you're fifty—and I mean that.

"Listen, Evans," the Major said to me slowly. "You've been selected because of your record on the Border. And yet, that means nothing, because in this case, mark you, you are to make no moves whatever, no matter what the opportunity may be, which would result in putting the lives of Hawkins and Whetstone in jeopardy. I know your type, and I know your record for getting into trouble, and out of it again, and I know your temperament. You fly there, do as you're told, and fly back, with no monkey business."

"Yes, sir," said I dutifully, and thought at the time that those orders would appease Tex MacDowell's pain at not being ordered to go himself.

Not that I'd take any chances, for the

sake of the two men, of course. But something might just come up which would give me a chance—you know. But I said "yes sir," and that was that.

If I had my fingers crossed, they're my own fingers.

TWO DAYS passed—three, and no word. Every man on the field was drawn tighter and tighter as time went on. Newspaper men swarmed like a plague of locusts. Barkoni was like a man possessed—saying little, but pacing his office ceaselessly. The hundred thousand was at the field, in cash, guarded night and day by shifts of three men with sawed-off shotguns. The extra-tank DeHaviland was on the line, all day long, warmed up at least twice daily to make sure nothing had gone wrong. It got so that the C. O. was telephoning the postmaster in town a half dozen times a day, to assure himself of the fact that there was no news.

Mr. Hawkins, apparently, hadn't slept since he'd become of age. Haggard and drawn, a nervous wreck, he finally went under the care of a doctor and was given opiates. The newspapers commenced to speculate on the proposition—had it been a cruel hoax? Had the prisoners attempted to escape, and been killed? Wasn't the unheard of coincidence, of the two men landing in an isolated place where they found men of such daring and ingenuity, proof in itself that the letter was the work of a madman or some cuckoo sensation hunter peculiar to these parlous times?

At first I didn't mind it so much, but as time dragged on, and every mail became a climax which finally collapsed with a dull thud, I became as much at ease as a brook trout on the end of a hook. A dozen times a day I saw to it that our seat-packs—parachutes—were in the ship and ready, that no landing or flying wires had loosened, and that the motor was O. K. I was worse than usual, because I was suffering from various and divers illusions. I wasn't thoroughly satisfied with the *status quo* that letter had indicated. I felt that perhaps there were details of one kind or another it hadn't mentioned—

Then, the morning of the fourth day, a motorcycle policeman roared between the gates, and around the huge hangar, and down the line.

"Where's the office?" he yelled to the group of which I was one. "Special for Mr. Barkoni!"

We found him, and by that time no one was around to see the letter opened, except every man on the field from mechanic to C. O.

The brush-haired instrument expert opened it, and ran his eyes over it quickly.

"It is the letter!" he yelled. "Crank up the ship, eh? Quick!"

Major Burton calmed the riot, and read the letter aloud to us all. Never shall I forget that moment or two. It was eleven o'clock in the morning, and the sun shone down from a cloudless sky on the long line of ships drawn up along the northern edge of the field, facing the hangars. Every type of heavier-than-air craft was there, from the tiny new Curtin Racer, capable of more than two hundred miles an hour, to the towering Barling Bomber—a six-motored triplane weighing fourteen tons and able to carry eight tons more. Up overhead Red Thomas was stunting the Balston scout—and down on the ground more than a hundred flyers, newspaper men and mechanics gave not a single solitary —— whether he killed himself or not, as they concentrated their attention on the C. O.

He read the letter slowly and clearly:

New York City,
August 7th.

Dear Mr. Barkoni:

We see by the papers that you are going to ransom our prisoners.

This will reach you before noon of the 8th. You will fly to Charleston, West Virginia, where, if you think best, you can regas your ship. There is a field three miles east, on the Kanawa River, suitable for landing, and arrangements for high test gas can be made in advance.

Proceed down the Kanawa to Crooked Creek, fourteen miles east of Charleston. Follow this creek southward until, spread on its banks, you observe a round piece of white canvas, with a cross, in black, in the center of it. It will be easily visible from any height.

Come down until your altitude is not more than fifty feet, or less if possible, so that you may drop the package with accuracy. Drop it as close to the signal as you can. Then, flying low and with no attempt to gain any altitude whatever, fly back toward Charleston. Should your ship, or any other, appear in the sky after the money is dropped, during the remainder of this day, you will not only have lost your money, but lost your friends.

You have from noon to dark to accomplish your mission.

Absolute adherence to these directions will give you back the two prisoners, healthy and well. Any deviation from the procedure laid down will result in their immediate death.

Reread the first letter, if necessary, to refresh your mind.

There it was—typewritten like the first, and mailed from New York instead of Chicago.

A dozen ideas occurred to me—one of them that some outside party might have written the second note on the chance of getting a hundred thousand dollars. But that was a chance, apparently, that had to be taken. It's —— to know that with every move you're gambling with other people's lives.

A moment later our ship was roaring along on the warm-up. Barkoni and I were getting on our flying coveralls, and strapping on our seat-packs. These seat-packs are simply folded parachutes, set at a flyer's thighs and held on him by a harness, the four straps of which go over his shoulders and around the inside of his thighs, meeting at the waistline and fastened there with one master safety buckle. This is so the 'chute can be got rid of, harness and all, as soon as you strike the ground. A wind can play —— with you if you can't get your 'chute off. When flying, the pilot or passenger sits on the 'chute, all airplane seats being built to allow for the 'chute these days. This was at the time when all flyers were first compelled to wear a 'chute at all times, and I wasn't yet accustomed to it.

A growing crowd seethed around the ship as I strapped a Colt around me. Barkoni was slower getting ready than I, but he wasn't losing any time, either. The Major had sent a messenger with a wire to Charleston to have gas ready for us, and also to have several cops on hand to guard the ship and money during the few minutes of gassing. Another mechanic came rushing out with a map, and the big Liberty was roaring like mad as the dust swirled up underneath its tail like a sizable whirlwind.

A moment later, helmeted, goggled, 'chuted and excited, we were strapped in. One look at the maze of instruments, just for form's sake, a brief interval when I tried the motor on each switch of the double ignition system, and I was taxiing the big bomber out on the field. Back on the line there was wild activity. Ships were being made ready to proceed to Charleston, there to stay for the night and start scouting at dawn. Not before then—the rules in the letters were to be lived up to absolutely. The wires were alive with messages to a hundred cities and towns, that somewhere along the sixty mile length of Cripple Creek at least one of the band was lurking.

The newspaper men would be rushing to town with their stories, too, and suddenly, for the first time, I realized that a whole country would be watching the De Haviland beneath me and speeding it on its journey.

As I gave it the gun and pushed the stick ahead, I'll be —— if there wasn't a kick in the coming flight.

THE rays of the sun were leveling from the west as I sent the extra-tank D. H. twisting on its way down Cripple Creek. Three thousand feet high over a panorama of rugged, thickly wooded mountains, deep-cleft gorges, and occasional tiny, isolated clearings—it was as though the thriving city of Charleston simply could not be over there behind the hills. The little creek writhed through the hills, sometimes hundreds of feet below the lowest trees. Occasionally, along its banks, there were long, narrow clearings spacing the more numerous places where mountainsides reached the edge of the water.

I looked back at Barkoni infrequently. He sat there like a statue, his flat nose and round, wide jaw looking still flatter and wider below his helmet and goggles. His eyes, somehow, looked more peculiar than ever behind the shielding glass.

I was flying high so that I could observe more territory with greater ease. Thirty miles down the stream I decided that if nothing showed up in the next fifteen minutes I'd unwind the radio antenna anyhow and have it ready to use.

The fifteen minutes passed slowly. It was nerve-wracking enough to fly over that limitless vista of primeval hills where a landing airplane would be helpless most of the time, but the strain of waiting for that signal made the time pass as swiftly as glue rolling uphill. The creek twisted and turned on itself to such an extent that it made Rio Grande seem like a geometrical line.

Then, a few miles ahead, I saw that it straightened, and for four or five miles ran in an almost straight line. Occasionally, along the unswerving stretch between the mountains, I could see cleared spaces and, I thought, one cabin.

A moment later, and I craned my ostrich-like neck over the side and strained my eyes. I thought I saw a white speck in the middle of a handkerchief-sized field—

I leaned down, and started to unreel the antenna. I turned the wheel while looking ahead, to make sure. I hoped with all my heart it was the signal—it meant that those letters had been no dream.

The wheel felt funny under my hand. I looked down, to find that the antenna was just a loose, snarled mess of cable. It wasn't unreeling at all. And during the last test at Cook Field, that very morning, it had been absolutely O. K. in every way, and reinspected afterward.

In a second it seemed as though something hit me plumb in the face. That reel had been tampered with—and it must have been tampered with in Charleston. And the only one who could have done it—

Something dug me in the back—and it felt as though it could be only one thing. Dazed, I glanced around just as the motor died so suddenly it was a worse shock to my ears than a loud explosion.

Barkoni had cut the throttle, and he was standing in the back seat, leaning over me. His observer's belt, constructed to allow free movement, allowed him to bend over toward my cockpit. His Colt was thrust into my back, and his curious upward sloping eyes were muddy, with red spots in them.

"Do not move!" he barked in my ear, and his stubby finger curved over the trigger of the .45.

I was gliding the ship automatically, while my white-hot mind seemed to comprehend a thousand things all at once. He was taking my gun from its holster now, methodically and without haste.

Two things emerged in blinding clarity from the chaos inside my head. Possibilities, rather. Barkoni, himself, had engineered the kidnaping plot, or else he was now taking advantage of the fact that he had a hundred thousand dollars in cash, and was going to let the kidnapers and their prisoners go, and try to make off with the hundred thousand himself.

There were a dozen offshoots of either turn in the road. If he was the head of the plot, the whole thing had been framed—and little Chick Hawkins was in on it.

If the second possibility was the truth, it meant that Barkoni, with both guns, would force me to fly him somewhere with the money.

"Jump!"

His rasping voice snapped that into my ear, and only my belt kept me from starting clean out of the ship. Both guns were trained on me now, and his cold, smooth, passionless face showed no trace of expression.

In that second I'm willing to admit that I felt as I never have before or since. I've gone through a thing or two here and there in my time, but never before have I known the utterly paralyzing fear that made my mouth dry and my stomach an empty void and the cold sweat break out all over my body. I was as certain that I'd never get down alive. The man who had generated that plot—the ice-like machine standing over me with those guns—would murder me to give himself more time to escape. He could fly—that was now a certainty. He didn't want to shoot me then, because he had no way of conveniently unstrapping my belt, and dumping my dead body out. Possibly he was a very poor flyer, anyway—an amateur. But if I'd unstrap my belt and stand, ready to jump, he could shoot me and dump me out—or he could pot me as I floated down. Then, with more than four hours of fuel, he could roar away somewhere, land, and disappear before any one knew what had been done. And it would be at least a day before my dead body was found.

And he'd wanted Goggles Gray to be his pilot—to get the man he hated at the same time! And goofy little Goggles would have been easy to handle, too. That fog test argument had simply been Barkoni's method of planting the fact that he wanted Gray as his pilot for any sort of a trip. That would set the stage for the engineer's being his chauffeur on this flight.

The gun dug my side, and suddenly those dark eyes seemed crimson as the blood deluged them.

"Jump!" he snarled, leaning over as far as he could.

I gestured ahead to the open field where the signal was gleaming in the sun.

"Give me a chance!" I begged. "Don't make me jump in the woods!"

He hesitated a moment, and then a thin, wolfish sort of a smile came to his lips. He nodded, and sat down on his stool. But the guns never wavered.

Just why, I don't know, but I was *sure* that I'd never get down alive. He wasn't the man to overlook any bets whatever. Why should he leave me alive when he could leave me dead—and the murder be laid, probably, to the kidnapers? Maybe he had a plan to destroy the ship entirely, and disappear from the face of the earth.

And Whetstone and poor little Chick would be doomed. He was doublecrossing his aides, making off with all the money—or else, if not in the plot to start with, he was selling three lives for a hundred thousand.

If I hadn't had the hunch that made me crawl at my helplessness, the plan I followed would never have been born in my seething brain and probably I'd never have had the nerve to follow it. But one look back at that calm face with the inhuman eyes decided me. It was, I figured, merely a question of sure death against a desperate chance for something better.

There was a fair chance for myself, if only he was a poor flyer!

I turned on the throttle while the ship was still in the dive. We were pointed directly for the field, now a mile ahead, and were about half a mile high. As the air-speed meter crept slowly to a hundred and ten, I raised one foot slowly from the rudder, keeping the part of my body that he could see as stiff as a ramrod. In a few seconds I had, with my foot, turned the gas pet-cock at one side of the cockpit. The main tank was shut off, now—as soon as the gas in carburetor and gas lines was used, the motor would die. He might not think of the explanation for it—might not know enough.

Then, while still a half-mile back of the field, I took a quick glance downward to make sure. Along the banks of the creek there were tiny sand-bars, and an occasional small opening in the trees.

I couldn't give him a chance to shoot by standing up. He'd do it then, almost certainly, and dump me out.

My hand unsnapped the buckle without his knowing it. We were going fast, now—a hundred and thirty.

I suppose my face was white as a new-laundered shirt as I did my stuff. I was numb—beyond feeling.

Without warning I jerked back on the stick with all my might, and at the same time jammed on full right rudder. In a split second the DeHaviland shot upward, and turned horizontally on its back.

I sprung from the floor, and fell out, head down.

My hand in the rip-cord ring, at my side, I fell end over end. I was sure he had shot as I left the ship, but my gamble had been a success. The total surprize had ruined his shot—or he hadn't shot at all as he was suddenly thrown upside down.

Earth and sky were whirling dizzily, but I had no particular sensation of falling. I couldn't find the ship, spinning as I was. And I wasn't going to pull the ring until the last minute I thought was safe. No swinging down slowly for me, while he straightened the ship, possibly started the motor again, and dived at my 'chute to knock me off.

I don't know how far I fell in a succession of somersaults. Must have been more than a thousand feet. The sensation of falling commenced to grip me as the earth came closer, and my head was getting dizzy.

I loosened my muscles, and jerked the rip-cord ring.

The little pilot-chute sprung out, and the next second the great white bag of silk was flung to the breezes. And as it opened it caught me and wrenched me until my bones cracked. I was doubled up with the shock, and every muscle in my body seemed strained.

I was swinging in a terrific arc, but it was gradually lessening. The ground seemed close, now, but I paid no attention to my landing while I searched the sky eagerly.

The ship was far above me, just coming out of a terrific dive, apparently. It had been flopping on its back all that time. And the motor wasn't going.

I did a fool thing, I suppose, by watching it for the next few seconds, and not paying attention to where I'd land. But the motor didn't roar forth up there, and the D. H. was coming down slowly—now diving, now almost level. Barkoni wasn't much of a flyer, he was overcontrolling the ship badly.

FOR a second, as I looked down and started slipping my 'chute by grabbing the shroud-lines from harness to bag on the right hand side, I felt like a million dollars. Almost directly below me there was a sand-bar, and by slipping the 'chute it looked as though I could counteract the very weak little breeze that was drifting me slightly. And, by all that was holy, less than a hundred yards away one of the guns had fallen!

Evidently, in grabbing for the stick when I'd flopped the ship upside down, Barkoni had dropped one of the Colts.

For a second, with that motor up there showing no signs of life and the Colt, fallen on soft ground where I could get it, available, I felt as though I wouldn't be surprized to see Whetstone and Chick appear there on the ground and tell me the whole thing was a joke.

And that very thing sobered me as I dropped toward the ground. I had escaped, temporarily—but the object of our trip was farther away than it ever had been. Some hidden observer must have watched—and what would he be doing now?

For the next few seconds, though, I had to forget all that. I slipped the 'chute desperately now, hauling one side of it down until I was dropping like a comet as I strove to hit that soft sand.

And I did it, hitting it so hard my legs were numb, and one ankle turned, and my flat feet were buried to the ankles. If my pedal extremities had been as small as the average, I guess I'd have been buried alive.

The ship was still a thousand feet high, wobbling down slowly. It was a cinch my wild gamble had won twice. Barkoni couldn't figure out and fix what was wrong.

There was only one place for him to try to land—the field where the signal was. And I hoped he'd crack up and kill himself, but I was taking no chances.

It didn't take me ten seconds to have the 'chute off, and I took the trouble to weight it down with rocks from the stream. Then I leaped for the gun. I had it by the time the D. H. had come down another five hundred feet. As I ran for the field, a quarter of a mile away, I examined the Colt, and couldn't see that it had been hurt. The earth had been soft, and apparently it was all right.

I have felt better in my life than I did as I tore through the woods for that field. At any moment I might get potted by those unseen kidnapers. And how poor Whetstone and Chick would come out of it all I didn't know. Furthermore, the more I thought about it the more I was certain that Barkoni had drawn Chick into the plot some way—and that left a bad taste in my mouth and made even victory, if by any chance it should come, take on a dull and leaden hue.

I got to the field just as Barkoni, by some miracle, floated the ship perilously over the trees. It was a rolling clearing, grown to weedy grass about two feet high. What hidden obstacles there were in it I didn't know. But it was big enough, although awfully narrow.

My eyes darted around through the trees, expecting to be jumped on any second. I was making for a spot opposite where I thought Barkoni would end up. I was gasping for breath, and the sweat was dripping off me in a shower.

Through the thin screen of trees I saw the ship hit and bounce. Barkoni was plainly just able to fly enough to say so. It came down again, and again it bounced. This time the nose was high in the air, and the D. H. stalled eight feet above the ground. Down it came, as I angled toward the edge of the field.

It hit hard again, just as the nose was snapping down. It rolled a second, and then, undercarriage tangled in the grass, it slowly and gracefully nosed up.

I ended up behind a tree, with scarcely breath enough to keep myself from strangling. I was less than fifty feet from Barkoni.

"Don't move!" I yelled, and to let him know I had the gun, shot.

I never thought until later what would have happened had there been a clot of dirt deep in the barrel or somewhere. But the gun went off all right.

He was in the cockpit, standing, poised to jump out, and his gun was in his hand. He saw me—or what parts I exposed to his vision.

"Make one move, Barkoni, and I swear I'll drill you without another whisper!" I gulped breathlessly.

He didn't move, and neither did I. There we were, him standing in the ship, and me lurking behind a tree, trying to get my breath and also to snap back into my right mind. I had my gun leveled at him, resting the barrel of it on a low twig of the tree.

And if ever a man was in a mental tailspin, it was me. I didn't know exactly where I was, or what to do. If a katydid had chirped, I'd have jumped out of my shoes. It was quiet as the grave except for the gurgle of the stream and my own deep breaths. With the mountains on every hand it seemed as though there wasn't another living soul in the world but Barkoni and I.

At any second his accomplice, or more than one of 'em, might descend on the scene, and I'd be a long way up Salt Creek with no paddle and a hole in the boat. It was that thought that finally pierced through the fog and got me under way.

"Throw down that gun!" I yelped, and he did, without delay. I guess he didn't question my sincerity.

I stalked out toward him, my eye glinting down the barrel of the gun so that there'd be no delay if he made any false moves. He stood as stiffly as ever, and his eyes met mine with hard, composed indifference.

"Well, Barkoni, I never suspected it before, but it strikes me you're so crooked you could undress behind a corkscrew without being immodest. Did you arrange this kidnaping thing, from start to finish, or were you merely trying to steal a hundred thousand from the kidnapers?"

"I arranged it, to get what was due me," he said precisely. "Whetstone has stolen my ideas, my brains, and given me nothing!"

"And you were going to kill me, I suppose, and let Whetstone and Chick go to ——."

"I was not going to kill you," he told me. "Lieutenant Gray—who knows?"

"Well, you're in a bad way, Barkoni," I told him. "However, I'll guarantee to testify that you helped out the State, so to speak, if you tell me where Whetstone and Chick are!"

As I said this, I was walking around the ship to get the stream at my back.

He didn't answer for a moment. I guess he was trying to make up his mind whether or not he had a chance to escape. Finally he said:

"They are within two miles of this place."

"That business of them being a long way from here was a stall, eh?" I commented as my eyes darted around, striving to catch any movement in the woods. "Well, if any of your friends are around here expecting to pot me, they're going to find me hiding behind you. How many of 'em are there?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"One is all. He will have seen what happened, and not know what to do. He will be in hiding."

I was looking at the ship, and wondering. The propeller had not been broken in the noseup, because it hadn't been whirling to speak of when he'd come down. It looked like a possible take-off to me.

"Why do you tell me that, instead of bluffing that a bunch of thugs are in the woods, on their way to get me?" I snapped at him.

His admission had been somewhat remarkable, I thought, and it sounded fishy to me.

"You can not be bluffed," he stated in his guttural voice. "What is the use?"

Utterly cold-blooded and at ease, apparently, I had to gaze at the fellow with some admiration. He looked shorter and fatter and squarer-faced than ever in his flying suit and helmet, and his smooth round face was as unperturbed as though he'd been reading in his own library.

However, outside thoughts like that were out of order. I was feeling better by the second. All at once, it seemed, my mind settled and got clear and I got under way.

"Listen," I barked at him. "You were going to steal the whole hundred thousand and beat it. I know it. You haven't denied it. That meant that you were going to let Chick and Whetstone get killed by your own men—"

"They would not have been killed by this guard I have," he said in his dogmatic way. "He does not know what it's all about, and he would have merely fled. I—"

"That's what you say!" I interrupted. "Now listen, you low and lofty thug! I'm not going to bother with you for a second, and I don't want to listen to any more excuses. You say they're within two miles of here, and have one guard.

"I'll tell you just what you're going to do. You're going to go straight to this hiding-place, while I take the air in this ship. And lest you forget, it's got machine guns on it. I'll watch you from the air. You're going in, and you're going to release Chick and Whetstone, and give them whatever guns there are around the place, and tell 'em just what happened. Then you and your friend, under the guardianship of your ex-prisoners, are going to gather right here on this open field.

"If you do all that, it may save you a few years in the pen. If you make any wrong moves, you've got two things to look forward to. Maybe a nice shower-bath of machine-gun bullets. Maybe not, because Chick and Whetstone'll be with you. But by flying a bee-line to Charleston, I can

make it in less than half an hour, and in a half hour more this country'll be swarming with ships, and five thousand men, if necessary, will be closing in on this neck of the woods from all sides, on the ground. You can't escape. And what'll happen to you for all these things, in that event, might be anything from a lynching to life."

I was talking fast, uncontrollably nervous. I felt as though any moment a bullet might whine out of those woods, despite the fact that I was so close to Barkoni. I had the feeling that I was being surrounded, somehow.

"Better do all you can, now, to make up and get off easy. You haven't got a chance, otherwise. What say?"

He stood like a statue, his unreadable almond eyes gazing down the tiny valley. Then:

"I will do as you say," he said quietly. "But the ship does not go—the motor—"

"I fixed that," I told him. "Just turned the gas off. I'm glad you're just an amateur flyer. Kept it under cover, though, didn't you?"

"Aha!" he said, half to himself, and there was a queer gleam in his eyes as they met mine.

"Well, climb down," I instructed him as I picked up his own gun. "And hurry!"

I was nervous as a witch. The sun had disappeared now, and it would soon be dark. And somehow those quiet, shadowed mountainsides, to my overwrought brain, were like monsters crouching for a leap that would engulf me. As far as I could see, I was doing the only thing possible, but I didn't know.

He didn't make a false move as we pulled the tail down, and I climbed in the cockpit. I turned on the gas, primed the motor, and he cranked it. It started immediately, and ran as sweetly as a brand new dollar watch. And made almost as much noise.

I beckoned him around to the cockpit, a gun in my hand for emphasis. I couldn't get over the way he was taking it. He was as quiet and resigned as possible—a sort of philosophical surrender. He acted as though he didn't care. He'd gambled, lost, and that was that.

There were a hundred things I wanted to ask him: About Chick's part in it, about what he meant by "getting what was due him" from Whetstone, and other matters. But there was no time for social chat. I felt as though I'd explode if I didn't get off the ground.

"Walk alongside the wing and help me turn," I told him. "And then hurry. You understand what you're to do? O. K."

As I taxied the ship through the tall grass, I kept a wary eye on him and another on the surface of the ground. Rolling, and high grass, but otherwise not bad. If I could plow through the grass fast enough, I was all right. If I didn't, we'd have to camp out, until other ships came on a search for me and mine.

I wished to —— I could believe him when he'd said that Chick and Whetstone were in no real danger.

He turned me around by hauling on one wing, and I used the slight impetus in the turn by giving the old bus full gun without stopping. For twenty yards it wallowed slowly through the grass, but then it picked up speed. A little more than half way down the field we were going fast, but I could feel the drag of the grass on the spreader bar. I rocked the old boat off the ground, and bounced her back into the air by jamming the stick all the way forward. I kept this up—it didn't have speed enough to stay in the air—and every leap was longer and faster. Fifty yards from the trees I was off, but going slow. Barely staying off the ground.

I angled out over the stream, slightly, and passed the barrier of trees by a slight margin—very slight. I was roaring down over the creek, ten feet high, and ahead the trees were closing in on me. I held her down, though, and one mighty zoom got me over them. A hundred yards more, and I was all right, circling back over the landing field.

He was already on his way. As I circled higher and higher I watched him struggling up the mountainside. If I hadn't had a neck which resembles a six-foot length of rubber hose I couldn't have seen him. With no parachute on, my seat was very low for good visibility.

Fifteen minutes, and he was following a straight course. Occasionally he'd disappear for a minute in the thick forest, but I kept my eye pretty steadily on him.

Then, all of a sudden, he plunged into what looked like a large, very thick clump of bushes, and I didn't see him again.

Ten minutes passed, without a sign of him. I figured that there must be a cave

there, or some artificial dugout which was the hiding-place. It was a darb, too—utterly impossible to spot from the air, and I presume not so obvious from the ground.

I got restless as ——. No telling what was going on there. Barkoni either had to capture his own accomplice, or convince him that surrender was the only thing—"

I was getting ready to shoot a few rounds, just to remind him, when they showed up. Like rabbits popping out of a magician's hat, four men appeared from the bushes.

Did I feel good? Ask me, did I feel good! The world was mine and the intoxication thereof.

I came spiraling, side-slipping, and diving earthward, and roared along down the mountain side directly over the trees. Whetstone and Chick, all right—and they waved guns at me. Ahead of them Barkoni and a huge fellow plodded along stoically.

I didn't land until they'd appeared in the clearing. It was within fifteen or twenty minutes of twilight, and I had to work fast, but somehow I didn't trust the evidence of my own eyes. If I'd only had my radio working all would have been well, but with darkness coming on special arrangements were necessary. The Charleston ships couldn't operate at night in that country and on that field.

I staggered down in the slowest stall landing I ever made, using the matted stretch which I'd made on my take-off, and finally grounded all right. Chick and Whetstone had found something to tie up the two prisoners with, and were at my side as the ship stopped.

Both had beards like rabbis, but Whetstone's fleshy, genial face looked as though he hadn't passed through any great hardship. One cut on a spot half way between his high forehead and his partially bald head was all.

Chick, though, looked like a ghost. His face was full of hollows, his eyes like deep sockets with a flame in their depths.

"Greetings," I remarked as I got out and shook hands. "This is all unexpected-like."

I devoted a few seconds to reassuring them about their fathers, wives and friends, and then said:

"What did Barkoni do, and what did he tell you?"

"Said that the plot he'd hatched had been seen through, by you, and that after a battle in the ship he'd finally forced you to jump, but that then he had to land," Whetstone said with a grin. "Told Harper that there was no sense in trying to escape—"

"He didn't mention the little matter of his forcing me to jump so that he could fly away with the hundred thousand and not ransom you at all?"

I created what could conservatively be described as a sensation. It took me ten minutes or so to unfold the full tale, and they listened with marked attention. I didn't mention what I suspected of Chick, or bring up the peculiar coincidence of their landing right where the kidnapers could nab them. I sort of put off that item.

SOMEHOW it seemed that the thickening twilight was getting into me as I looked at the silent, nervous Hawkins. I sort of mentally squared my shoulders, though, and dived in.

"I've got to fly back to Charleston to keep them from spreading an alarm for me," I told 'em. "This Barkoni being what he is, I might better take him along with me and get him safely in the coop up there. No tellling what'll happen if he sticks around here. If you boys aren't starved, you might just as well stay here, as guards instead of prisoners, until morning. It's a long hike to civilization, and we can get you in ships tomorrow."

The ragged pair nodded, Whetstone as jovial as could be.

"I've had hiking enough. You should've seen this big bozo Harper rag us through the woods. We walked and rode horseback over a hundred miles."

"Must have," I answered absently. "Chick, can I converse with you alone for a minute?"

Sudden, tense silence fell. I hadn't said a word about the fact that Barkoni, from Daysville, couldn't have foreseen the exact spot where the ship would land—without Chick's assistance. Neither had Whetstone referred to it. But of course he must know—and at that second, I think, all three of us were thinking the same thoughts.

And they weren't pleasant.

"There's no need," Chick said finally, eyes on the ground. "I know what you want to talk about. Mr. Whetstone knows it all—I told him before you people got here

today. The whole thing. I was in on it, and I'm a —— crook and a fool and I wish to —— that bullet had done for me!"

"What bullet?"

He pointed to his left arm.

"Got drilled through here," he said dully.

"And saved my life," the florid, now serious millionaire put in quietly.

Nobody said anything. That was a new angle—

"Listen, Slim," Whetstone said finally. "The boy's told me the whole yarn. He's not blameless, but he's not entirely as bad as he thinks he is, either.

"He got in debt a few hundred dollars up in Daysville. Then Barkoni suggested the crap game to get money fast—and Chick kept losing. When he was just about crazy, Barkoni came along with this proposition.

"Chick maintains, and I believe he's telling the truth, that Barkoni convinced him that this thing, while technically illegal, was actually a good deed. Barkoni claimed that I'd stolen his patents, and that some of my little developments were really his.

"Furthermore, he had faked papers to prove it. Patents, and things like that, and bills of sale. Chick, by accident, happened to have one that Barkoni had showed him in his pocket, and I saw it. Barkoni was a good friend of Chick's supposedly, in an under-cover way, and he convinced Chick that I was a thief. He proved to Chick that I really owed him a half million at least, and that he, a foreigner and all that, stood no chance whatever of ever getting his rights from me.

"So this was cooked up, with the understanding that no harm was to come to me if the money was not forthcoming. All Chick had to do was fake a forced landing in the right place, and supposedly be a prisoner along with me. This chap Harper was to get the money for Barkoni—there's another one in it, a well-educated Englishman, who helped capture us and then left. He mailed the letters from Chicago and New York, I suppose. Anyhow, this was to be a way of getting a small share of the money I was supposed to have beaten Barkoni out of, without risk to either Chick or Barkoni. This hidden hang-out was arranged by Harper, and he could thumb his nose at the State militia in these mountains.

"Chick fell for it. I don't believe, and you don't believe, Slim, that the boy here would go into a kidnapping stunt like this on an out-and-out crooked basis. At least, I've known him for some time, and we've talked a good deal later, and I'm sure of it. Barkoni, a genius in his way, convinced him that it was merely a matter of getting back, at the point of a gun, the money he'd been robbed of."

"I swear to —— you're right!" Chick burst forth, his eyes burning into mine. "But I know I wouldn't have been such a weak, childish fool if I hadn't been in debt, and money held out to me! And whether or not it kills Dad and sends me to jail, I'm not going to be whitewashed! I'll stand up and tell the whole story—and you know, Mr. Whetstone, I was ready to do that before we ever knew that Barkoni was going to doublecross me!"

"I know," nodded the kindly millionaire. "But I hope that Slim will see that it isn't necessary to do all that. Listen, Slim. I have no disposition to excuse Chick. He's been very weak and foolish about this whole thing. But he's young—and none of us are perfect. Even I am not altogether blameless, perhaps. More of that later. Neither am I getting foolishly sentimental because he actually did save my life. Harper does not know that Chick was in the plot. Barkoni promised Chick that no one would know. Of course, Harper might suspect that the landing in an exact spot implied Chick's connivance, but he's an ignorant mountaineer and Barkoni might have explained that the landing would take place for some legitimate reason on Chick's part—mapping, or to try it out as an emergency field, or anything.

"Anyhow, Harper is hot-tempered and full of mountain weakness for a gun. I wasn't easy to handle, at first, and I nearly got away. And Harper, with murder in his eyes if I ever saw it, drew and shot at me—and Chick, here, threw himself in front of me. His arm, and my pocketbook in a breast pocket, saved my life. That doesn't make what Chick did any better—but I do owe him something."

I shall never forget that great-hearted inventor, talking there in the falling shadows. I comprehended the ins and outs of the situation. And, as he'd said, there were some rather subtle points in the matter. Particularly when he went on:

"Of course, Slim, you believe and we all do that Barkoni, in addition to showing

himself in his true colors as an ordinary crook who'd even knife his friends in the back, intended to murder you in cold blood, or any other pilot he'd had. Consequently, you may think it the most important thing in the world to give him his just deserts. But, if you could sacrifice some of that for Chick's sake, and want to, I have a plan."

He stopped there, and waited. I took a look at Chick. His face was contorted with the effort to restrain his emotion. And I thought back to his father. And I thought of a few items in my own past—and the pasts of most other men I'd known. And a lot of other things. And so I said as a matter of course:

"I'm no qualified judge of morality in any form, Mr. Whetstone, and it would tickle me to death to get Chick off easy. Just what's the lay?"

"I suggest this," Whetstone said quietly, and now his hand was on Chick's arm, as though to give him strength and hope. "Harper I am sure knows nothing about Chick, unless Barkoni has told him recently. To Harper, Chick was a prisoner along with me. I suggest that Chick and I let him escape tonight, and take the chance he expected to take of getting away from his pursuers in the woods. We'll report everything as it is, and let the authorities try their best to get him. If they do, he'll tell his story, and it may indirectly cast suspicion on Chick, because Harper may confess that the kidnaping was not merely taking advantage of an accident—seizing an unexpected opportunity—but that the landing was premeditated for some reason which the authorities will know to be a false one. That's a chance we'll have to take, but I think that in return for a chance at freedom, he'll agree to testify, if caught, that he and the Englishman just happened to see the ship land, and got a good idea of holding me for ransom all of a sudden.

"Now about Barkoni."

That was what interested me, in person, I may say here. I was all ears as the mental giant before me—and I don't mean that kiddingly, either—pointed out the way.

"Barkoni, from his own twisted viewpoint, may have, in the back of his head, what he considers a fair cause for feeling against me. He worked out several things for me, working for a generous salary, using my laboratory, and adapting some of my ideas. I considered that I paid him liberally for all the help he gave me. But perhaps I was not as liberal as I might have been.

"In any event, in return for his keeping his mouth shut about Chick, we'll offer him this: You take him back to Charleston, and he will be under arrest for the attempted theft of one hundred thousand dollars, with no hint that he was in the kidnaping plot at all. Under the conditions, that theft will arouse a storm of hatred for him, of course—but he'll get off much more easily than he would with the kidnapping charge tacked on. And no one will insinuate that you are sure he intended to murder you for additional safety.

"And, at that, he'll pay price enough. Grand larceny will mean many years in jail for him. As an additional clincher, I'll testify that after all this has happened to me that I've sort of come to the conclusion that I was not as fair to Barkoni, perhaps, as I might have been, and that I could see, now, where there was a tiny bit of basis for his having a grievance, and the shadow of an excuse for his trying to get some more of my money. That won't do much good, but may take a year or so off his sentence."

It sounded fairly snaky to me. A few more ideas, surmises and details passed between us, but it seemed, at the end, fairly workable. Harper should be well satisfied, Barkoni very much so, and if the Englishman was caught, doubtless he knew nothing of Chick's part in the plot anyway.

And another point came out. Both the unknown Englishman and Harper had been paid retainers, at it were, of one thousand dollars in advance, with five thousand dollars more promised out of the hundred thousand. They'd got something out of it already.

At the end I stuck out my hand to Chick.

"I don't suppose I'll ever free myself of my affliction of having a mental freeze and a verbal thaw, old man, but my conversation won't be about you, I promise. We'll just forget all about this, eh?"

He hesitated before he shook hands—a thin, haggard, burning-eyed ghost of the laughing, eager, reckless youngster I had known. Then he took it—and when Whetstone and I went over to our bound captives he was sitting on the ground, his body shaken and torn by sobs he could control no longer.

A HALF HOUR later, when one end of the field was barely visible through the deepening darkness, I was giving my ship the gun. Whetstone was at the other end of the field, holding a torch so that I could make sure where my first obstacle was. It was touch and go, but the old ship, vibrating a bit because the prop tips were torn by the tall grass, made it for the second time.

Barkoni was in the rear seat, his hands bound behind his back. That little chunk of steel, without perceptible heart or moral sense of any kind, had accepted our offer calmly. He was apparently unashamed and unaffected, and had greeted his employer with utter naturalness. Harper, tall, lanky, and sullen, had accepted the reprieve with considerable eagerness. We'd come clean with him—he knew that upon our arrival in Charleston he'd be a fugitive, just as though all had gone off according to original schedule. He had a night's start on thousands of pursuers and a dozen airplanes. But set a mountaineer loose on his native heath, and a needle in a haystack, by comparison, stands out like a buggy on Fifth Avenue.

That hadn't taken five minutes. I'd got my 'chute, folded it, and put it on, we'd trussed up Barkoni and threw him in the ship, left the hundred thousand in charge of Whetstone and Chick, now well-armed, and taken our leave. There was about forty minutes of flying, if we hit a bee-line instead of following the creek.

Here and there, spaced miles apart, were tiny points of light which marked the cabins of the hill people—and finally, only fifteen miles ahead, the lights of the unseen city of Charleston made a wan splash against the sky.

I felt as though I was there, almost—the last barriers were only four or five miles ahead, and my vibrating ship seemed to be quivering with eagerness to hurdle them.

And there, with safety just in my grasp, the flying gods took a good laugh for themselves—and my motor sputtered, and almost died. What it was I never knew. That vibration, due to the scarred prop tips, might have broken the gas-line, or the carbureter jets got plugged, or the ignition system just laid down and died. The old ship had gone through plenty of flying that day, and it was through.

There was but one thing to do—anything was better than hurtling down into the pathless woods at seventy miles an hour, riding an overgrown gas-tank wherewith to cremate myself. I remember wondering at the freakishness of fate: my desire to salvage a four-hundred-dollar parachute was responsible for my having it on at all.

Then it hit me, and knocked me all of a heap: Barkoni, there in the back seat. His fate seemed to read that he was indestructible, somehow. He had one more chance for freedom—and it looked like a fair one, providing he survived the jump into those rocks and trees alive.

Gliding for flying speed, I took precious minutes to try to start the ship. Gravity tank didn't help, throttle jazzing, even a wild five-hundred-foot nose dive, which sometimes sucks out impediments in the gas-lines or jets. The D. H. dropped through the darkness like a great projectile, and I held her down until the whining, shrieking wires seemed to cut my ear-drums to pieces—but not a rumble of life came from the silent motor.

I pulled up, and turned to see Barkoni, standing in his cockpit, his bound hands behind his back. Without a word, holding the stick between my knees as we floated down, I got out my knife and cut him free.

"You can jump, or stay with the ship!" I yelled to him. "I'm going to jump!"

Without a word, without so much as a trace of fear on his face, he methodically dived head first over the side of the cockpit.

I waited to watch him. He disappeared in the darkness with dizzy speed, and a few seconds later, so far below that I rubbed my eyes like an amateur, a tiny white cloud shone against the black-blanketed earth.

I hate parachute jumping. I'm always scared stiff. But there was nothing to it. I stood out, leaning over to handle the stick, got one foot on the side of the cockpit—and jumped, cursing furiously.

As soon as I got out into the air, all seemed calm and peaceful. Then the wrenching shock of the opening 'chute, that sickening swing—

I forgot it all as I watched the blurred black bulk of the ship flashing downward. Straight as a string it went—not a spin or any other deviation from its course.

A crash that shook the earth came at the same instant as the leap skyward of a great ball of red flame, which speedily resolved itself into a big bonfire. For a second the

hopeless terrain had been spread clearly before me—trees and rocks and deep-cut gorges, and no break in the forest which covered all.

I didn't watch Barkoni closely—he was about to land, I knew. It was a terrific strain to wait—somehow worse than looking forward to my own collision with the earth. Would he crash through a tree at fifteen feet a second? A man can be horribly torn that way—

I couldn't tell. I heard the noise of splintering wood and tearing silk—and there was a small patch of white down there. That was all. Then I thought, finally, that in the dim light of the licking flames a mile away I saw a figure moving on the ground.

There was no need of slipping my 'chute, except to try to land near my prisoner. I couldn't see enough to pick out one spot as more desirable than another. All I could do was wait and wonder what I'd do to myself.

Less than a hundred feet from the ground I could see a little. I thought I saw a break in the trees—a long, narrow one. I was drifting toward it in the fresh night breeze, and I tried to make certain of hitting it.

Thirty feet above it I saw what it was, and through the calm and peaceful night blasphemy from the maddest man on or above the earth reverberated from the times hills. It was a narrow, deep-cut ravine, and I could see the sheer sides of it, and the pool of blackness which hid the bottom.

A second of wild hauling on the shroud-lines, and my body tore through the branch tips of a tree on its very run. My feet just escaped the edges of the ravine. That tree leaned out over it. The 'chute tore and ripped through the thick branches as I dangled over space. I'd drop like a stone when the big umbrella tore loose, and that gorge was at least forty feet deep—a crevice with perpendicular walls of solid rock.

It's all a sort of daze to me. I was clawing the smooth rock, seeking something to hold on to—and there was nothing. It was a wild scramble for life—but all I got out of it was bleeding fingers.

The 'chute, though, was stopping my fall.

I realized my one chance just in time. My writhing body became rigid and still—I scarcely breathed. And with a crackle here and a rip there, the 'chute finally came to rest hanging on I don't know how many twigs. And I was swinging above a forty-foot drop with no feather bed at the bottom of it.

And it seemed as though there came an ominous crack from above if I so much as moved a finger.

It took me at least a minute, moving with the slow care of a Georgia cracker at work, to abstract cigarets and matches, light a cheroot, and consider the matter. Barkoni was no more than a half mile from me—he'd seen me come down, if he wasn't hurt or killed. Would he come over and finish me off to give himself more time to escape? Should I yell and keep on yelling, on the chance that he'd come and rescue me, after disarming me? Was I justified in promising him anything?

It appeared that I was. Even if the 'chute held, up above there, I'd have to hang there for nearly twenty-four hours. Ships, next morning, would have to spot me, and then a ground party come and rescue me.

It wasn't pleasant. I was as comfortable as I would have been in a straight-jacket. And it seemed probable that if I hung there until rescued, if ever, several things might happen to me.

"Lieutenant Evans!"

I jumped as that guttural voice came from above me, and a couple more branches splintered.

"Good evening," I said finally. "Nice weather we're having, what? Did you get down all in one piece?"

I was just drooling, my mind numb. He had me now, and the world lay before him.

"Yes," he said precisely. "And I wish to bargain with you. If I free you, have I your word of honor not to use your gun, but to hand it to me forthwith?"

"Yes!" I gulped, and his words were priceless gems to me.

"While you hang there, I wish to state to you two or three things," he said precisely, his voice like a disembodied thing coming from the air. "You did not and do not believe me, but I had no desire to kill you. In fact, at the gambling-house I admired you. I now admire you more. Permit it to me to say that you are a man, sir, deserving of respect.

"Frankly, I would have killed Lieutenant Gray. A dozen times I wished to fight with him a duel which the laws and customs of

your barbarous country did not permit. He is a swine—egotistical scum who has insulted me, and whom I hate.

"The rest you know. It was a good plan, was it not? I am glad the child Hawkins will not suffer.

"All that remains is to say that if I pull you up you must take your chances. I shall leave you bound, here, with your parachute as a guide to the planes which will search tomorrow. You should be rescued before tomorrow night. Your word of honor, sir?"

"Absolutely, Barkoni!" I told him—and five minutes later I handed over to him my loaded gun, with extra ammunition clips.

He bowed his acknowledgment—that funny, stiff bow from the waist—and without another word bound me hand and foot with shroud-lines he ripped from the 'chute. Then he spread the 'chute itself over some low trees and bushes, making it a self-explanatory signal which couldn't be mistaken from the air.

The stocky, passionless little chunk of steel stood over me, finally, and for a second looked down at my recumbent body.

"Good night, good luck, and, I trust, good-by," he said, as though giving farewell to his hostess at a party.

An instant later he melted into the darkness, and the swish of his footsteps died away into ghostly silence. There went Barkoni—a crook and a potential murderer and a cold-blooded scoundrel whom it was a distinguished privilege to know.

MAKING a flying leap for the word finis, I'll merely mention that I was found toward midnight by a couple of mountaineers who'd heard and seen the ship come down, and our parachuting the 'chutes, so to speak. Just before dawn I hove into the camp outside of Charleston astride a mule with the highest and sharpest back-bone I've ever bestridden. The ships were warming for a take-off at dawn, while half of Charleston stood watch and debutantes served hot coffee to one and all.

Tex MacDowell and Johnny Redding took-off to get Whetstone and Chick, while the others took flight for a bit of scouting duty—after Barkoni. Harper's escape wasn't known to me yet, officially. I spent the next two days lying to all the newspaper men in the world, and half the Army officials, both in Charleston and Dayton. It took me a week more to catch up with the papers, I may say.

The Whetstone and Hawkins families had a reunion in Daysville the day following their rescue which made it seem temporarily lonesome to be a lone wolf, and in general everything was fine and the goose hung high whether the man-hunt in the hills got any results or not.

It did. Harper they never found, or haven't to date, and the Englishman must have buried himself in the wilds of Canada somewhere. But Barkoni they penned up, twenty of the two thousand who were hunting him, in a gorge way in the back country. And they got him—dead. Four of their bullets were in his indomitable. body, but the fatal one was a fifth one—in his temple. There was not a bullet left in his gun, and around that one bullet hole there was a powder burn, and the mark where the Colt's muzzle had pressed a rim in the skin.

Chick? Oh, he's fine. The team-work of Whetstone, himself and I was perfect—three brains with but a single scheme, three tongues that lied as one. He's an older and wiser chap, is Chicken, and a —— good officer and man besides. Doesn't drink or gamble at all, as far as I know—he passes for a saint in the Air Service.

The only thing the matter with him now is that he's married and got a baby. I guess it's a boy, because it's named John Whetstone Hawkins.

Yes, my first name is John. There's a coincidence for you.

THE CAMPFIRE

A Meeting Place for Readers ~ Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

THE Army has made its reply to C. B. A.'s letter. Here is the Navy's—from Harry Simon of our writers' brigade:

Navy Yard, Mare Island, California.

Apropos of the letter in the February 10th issue initialed C. B. A., you ask: "To what extent are we following in the footsteps of Rome, employing foreigners . . . as . . . defenders?" Well, as far as the Navy is concerned—and you may take that to include the Marine Corps—you can put the answer down, coming from me, as being to darn little extent.

C. B. A. points to the $21 a month offered to recruits as his reason for thinking that not very many able-bodied American youths are attracted to the service. This may apply the Army, but it has little application to the Navy. Nor to the Marine Corps, the total complement of which hovers around 16,000. With its good reputation and comparatively small complement, despite the small pay, the Marine Corps can and does pick and choose its men. And I don't think a military organization with a finer and more upstanding lot of men exists anywhere. And all American citizens too. You can check me up on this by calling up the nearest Navy recruiting station. Qualifications for first enlistments do not always remain the same. But to join either the Navy or Marine Corps, I'm under the impression that a person must now be a full-fledged American citizen. First papers aren't enough. This does not include men in the messman branch of the Navy, however, for which Filipinos, Hawaiians and other Islanders are enlisted.

The Navy has little trouble in keeping up to the allowed enlisted complement of about 85,000 men. In fact, to avoid overrecruiting, it is necessary now and then to shut down on first enlistments for short periods running into months, or to restrict first enlistments to certain definite ratings.

To come back to that $21 a month. That is the pay of an apprentice seaman in the Navy. I admit there are few who are fools enough to work long for that amount, and in the Navy they don't. In a few months the apprentice seaman is rated seaman second class and draws $36 a month. Seaman first class draws $54, and any man who can't make that rate in two years isn't worth more than the $36 he gets. As for the artificer branch, a fireman third gets $36, fireman second $54, fireman first $60. But the bright lad with his eye out to the main chance can better that. The Navy has its trade schools for machinists' mates, boilermakers, coppersmiths, electricians' mates, etc. A course of six to nine months at any one of these schools, and a year or so after enlisting—many times within the first year—the one-time apprentice seaman finds himself a second or third class rated man. More often it is the higher rating. Of the five mentioned above, only for electricians' mate is there a third-class

rate. The lowest for the others is second class. The pay for petty officers or rated men is as follows: Third class $60; second class $72; first class $84 a month. That is for first enlistments. There is a percentage increase for reenlistments, and the pay goes on up to $150 a month, which is about the most allowed. But as that only comes with chief, petty-officer ratings and length of service, we can leave that out of our reckoning. I do not think there are any men making chief on their first cruise now, though it was anything but rare, I understand, during the war.

The average age of the enlisted personnel of the Navy is around twenty-four or twenty-five. I'm quoting from a circular letter issued recently by the Bureau of Navigation, as I remember it. And now that I think of it, the Australians and New Zealanders were rather surprized at our comparative youth. Which is to show that the Navy gets 'em young, when you consider all the men on third cruises and up who are going on toward pensions. Take the lad of eighteen to twenty-one or thereabouts who learns a trade at the government's expense and receives $60 or $72 a month. Three squares and a flop thrown in on top of that, and in my opinion—and most of the Navy men will subscribe to it—he couldn't equal it on the outside. Leastwise, not before he came in, nor while he is becoming proficient at his trade. Also he is managing to see a little bit more of this planet than a job in his home town would afford him. And that's another item.

Many of these same men will extend and ship over for another four years, admitting that—all things considered—they can't do as well on the outside. I may be doing the same thing late this summer. But I expect to give civilian life a try first. I get paid off in June. Having had Army service during the war, naturally I grabbed at the first goldbrick job offering a rate. I got in as a seaman second at the old rate of pay—$48 a month. Didn't know much then, and as far as the outside is concerned—know as little now. Yeoman was the rate I grabbed. Being lucky, I am already first class. If I ship over I get $92—that includes the ten per cent. increase for second cruise. And shipping over will be an admission on my part that I at least can't do any better.

As for the foreign element and Reds in the Navy, I am willing to bet, from what I've seen of the "boots" in the Training Station at San Diego, that ninety-five out of every hundred new enlistments are American born and the other five per cent. we are getting now are almost thoroughly Americanized. You can scratch the Reds entirely from your consideration.

My letter, although it isn't intended as such, seems to have developed somewhat along the lines of a recruiting circular. However, anything printed in *Adventure* that might tend to raise the caliber of recruits for the Navy certainly can't be amiss with its aims. With this in mind, in the event that any of my present outpourings finds its way either wholly or in part to Camp-Fire, I might add for the benefit of any ambitious youthful readers with a Navy career in mind that the law authorizes the appointment to the Naval Academy of one hundred midshipmen each year from among the enlisted personnel of the Navy and Marine Corps who can pass the entrance examination and who are between 16 and 20 years old. Any one with an ordinary high-school education should have no difficulty in passing this examination. And the Navy maintains preparatory schools for the benefit of enlisted men of likely officer caliber, affording them a short course of three months or so to bone up for the exams.

I am not intimating in anything I've said that I wouldn't accept more pay. Like most people, I'm out for all I can get. But, taking it all in all, I do maintain that the enlisted personnel of the Navy is not so badly paid.—HARRY SIMON.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom Ernest Haycox rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his second story in our magazine.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Arranging one's own introduction is not easy. But to plump right into the middle of things I might say I don't shoot lions for a living and consider parachute jumping a great sport for the other fellow—not me. In plainer words, my ideas of a good time embrace milder pursuits.

WAS born in Portand, Oregon, a very short while before the present century. My people were the restless sort of English (world's full of them, isn't it?) who came over four or five generations back and have been constantly advancing westward since. It has been a sort of family habit to break away early from home and have a personal look-see; on the bum, sheepherding, ranching, logging, in the engine cab, or firing a Columbia river steamboat—anything to see the scenery.

In '16 I went south as one of the boys trying to help Pershing catch Pancho Villa (and ever since I've been wondering just how badly he wanted to catch Pancho Villa). Early next year the bugle blew again and I cherish the memory of the transport that took me across. Stealing rutabagas and onions from the vegetable pantries and conducting well-timed raids on the bakery and eating our spoils in some dark corner of the hold by the gleam of the blue lights while the officer of the guard raised ——; or of the time the cook put several bars of laundry soap on the steam pipes above the cooking vats—and then left the covers of those vats off while he made stew. We accounted for two subs on that trip and lost a half-dozen men or so in St. Nazaire harbor when some ammonia tanks broke. Otherwise, the war for me was one bunch of replacements after another, one round of battle with the M. P.'s and a desire to break even in the blackjack games. Thus for Democracy.

SINCE 1919 I've managed to put away a University degree and two or three jaunts across country. The greatest kick I ever got out of this existence is when I saw the Three Tetons one night from Jackson's Hole; again, when I rolled up in my blanket by the upper falls of the Snake and heard the owls hoot; and still again when I saw the sunset playing on the cobalt-colored peaks around Ketchikan, me having a grand stand seat out in the middle of the Straits, aboard a purse-seiner. That's real sport. This is a great land but, for me, the best part of it lies west of the Mississippi.—ERNEST HAYCOX.

FROM a comrade whose present profession of consulting engineer suggests past personal experience with chiggers, comes this suggestion for treatment of their bites. I trust it need not be mentioned that blue vitriol is an extremely dangerous thing to handle or to leave lying around.

Bradenton, Florida.

Subject, "Chiggers," as covered by the first article in the January 10th issue.

With the hope that my little contribution will be of benefit to many who get these tiny bugs on them I wish to submit the following remedy which is easy to get and cheap:

Dilute or mix blue vitriol crystals, about six or eight parts of water to one part of blue vitriol, use a little wad of cotton on a stick and cover the chigger-afflicted spot with this mixture, two or three times, as fast as the solution dries. This will kill the chigger and also stop the itching. This remedy is the only thing I have ever found that will do the work.—C. R. CONNER.

ON THE occasion of his first story in our magazine Edward Shenton follows Camp-Fire custom and rises to introduce himself.

Philadelphia.

When I attempt to write about myself my pencil reaches, "I was born" . . . and there I'm stuck. It sounds like fear of telling my age but I assure you that the reason is more complex. Perhaps I am attempting the wrong approach. If I wrote, "I died February 12, 1926," I might be released from this unwillingness. As it is I can find nothing that seems important enough to go into print or sufficiently interesting to attract possible readers. During the winters I live in Philadelphia where I write and wander through the art galleries seeking an occasional good painting; the summers I spend along the more desolate shores of Barnegat Bay where I can sail a two-by-four sneakbox and swim. I'm too lazy to fish. I served in the army, of course; with the 28th Division.—EDWARD SHENTON.

Of the final episode in the story he says: "It may seem an exaggeration, but it is an almost literal transcription of a scene that I witnessed."

SOMETHING from Harold Lamb in connection with the autobiographical historical document he puts into our hands for its story value:

Berkeley, California.

There is a puzzle connected with the big cannon mentioned in Babar's Memoirs—the one cast by Ustad Ali. In the first attempt there was not metal enough to fill the mold, but one portion—the "shot chamber" was found to be complete. Later, Ustad Ali cast the "powder chamber." Did the Moghuls in 1525 understand welding? Hardly possible. Yet the wording of the incident is clear enough.

As to the great battle of Kanwaha that overthrew the Rajputs and gave Babar the sole rule of India—the annals of Rajatshan (Todd's splendid chronicle) explain the defeat by mentioning treachery on the part of one of the Rajput princes who withdrew in the main attack.

But Babar, who is truthful enough, mentions no previous negotiation with any of the enemy. There was nothing in the course of the battle to indicate an untimely withdrawal of part of Rana Sanga's forces, and nothing in the Rajput character to make probable such treachery in the face of an invader.

In fact the Rajput chronicle states that Babar's advance force was almost completely annihilated, and this success, on the heels of the Bajaur victory, made the Rajputs so confident of victory that they deliberately put off the day of the battle. Babar, on the other hand, was very apprehensive of the issue.

SOME readers may desire to know what became of Shaibani Khan, the Uzbek king, who was the mortal enemy of the young Babar.

The Moghul prince tried again and again to overthrow Shaibani but could not defeat the powerful Tatar-Turks of Shaibani with the scanty followers of his early days. Shaibani had been joined by strong tribes from the Tatar Golden Horde, that were driven out of Sarai and Russia about this time and moved south.

The final story of Shaibani is not given in the Memoirs, but is too good to miss. Here it is:

In 1510 Shaibani, who had conquered most of Central Aais and had driven Babar out of Samarkand, ran foul of the illustrious Shah Ismael of Persia. Be it remembered that the Perisans of that day were both savage and formidable warriors, highly intelligent—and recent graduates of the invincible Mongol schooling in matters warlike.

Shah Ismael was also a Shiite—Shaibani an orthodox Muhammadan. There is a difference and a rare feud between Shiite and orthodox.

SHAIBANI, full of victories, had sent an army to invade Kerman. Shah Ismael sent an embassy to remonstrate. The Uzbek gave the embassy gifts for the shah—a staff (for an ailing man) and a *kachkuli*, or beggar's bowl. He added that he meant one day to make a pilgrimage to Mecca and would look in on the shah upon the way. (Mecca lay on the far side of Persia, of course.)

With all due courtesy, Shah Ismael sent back response that as far as title to the earth was concerned, he could not see how it had descended from Genghis Khan to a man like Shaibani—that he intended to make a pilgrimage to Meshed (the holy city of the Shiites, which would take him through Shaibani's land). He sent a spinning-wheel and cotton (implying that mere talk was a woman's pastime, and Shaibani was a woman).

And he added that Shaibani would discover that he was not dealing any longer with a child. (Meaning Babar.)

The Persians mustered their host and advanced suddenly into the Uzbek domains, shutting Shaibani up, after desperate fighting, in Merv. The siege drew out to great length and Shah Ismael saw

that he was likely to be caught between new Uzbek hosts.

THEN the wily Persian sent word to Shaibani—saying that *he* had been more punctual than Shaibani, that he had been to Meshed and had called upon Shaibani—that he had to return home but would be rejoiced if Shaibani would keep *his* word and come on to Mecca.

He then drew off and seemed to be in full retreat. Shaibani, angered and reckless, pursued with some twenty-five thousand men, but was cut off by the Persians, who broke down a bridge behind him. After grim fighting, the Uzbek chieftain was penned in a village with a few followers. He tried to leap the *serai* wall, his horse fell and he was slain.

Shah Ismael kept Shaibani's head and ordered the limbs of the khan's body to be sent to the four quarters of the earth. The skin of the head was taken off, stuffed with straw and sent to Sultan Bayezid at Constantinople. The skull Shah Ismael used as a drinking-cup, after it was plated with gold.

That was the end of Shaibani Khan.

AS TO Babar's end—the superstition that a man may take a dangerous sickness away from another by walking around the bed in a certain way and saying that he took upon himself what the other suffered is still met with, I think, in India. Babar and those who were with him, believed that this could be done.—HAROLD LAMB.

A LETTER from William P. Barron of our writers' brigade. As to cures for snake-bites, I'm always neutral. On what he says about educational tests of our soldiers during the war I'm not competent to pass but it certainly sounds convincing. Anyhow, it has always seemed to me amusing that any one should jauntily turn out formulas for jauntily measuring the human mind, that infinitely delicate, intricate and complex thing about which the total of human knowledge is so very slight. As if any one were one-thousandth part wise enough to measure and compute it with a list of questions!

New York City.

Camp-Fire: Regarding the letter of Mr. Martin of Rockport, I think he has in Button Snakeroot the drug known botanically as Echinacea angustifolia. It is also called cone-flower, black sampson, nigger-head, and snakeroot.

THIS plant is used in medicine, especially by eclectic physicians who laud it highly, especially in various blood-poisonings, infections, cuts, lacerations and snake-bites. On the other hand the allopathic doctors, in their various text-books say it is inert. So, "you pays your money, and takes your choice." Personally, I have great faith in this plant, as prepared under the trade name of Echafolta, and would not want to go very far afield without it. I have personally observed its good effects in the case of moccasin snake-bites—having used it several times. And it is certainly of use in acute infections of the hands and feet. I believe the Button Snakeroot above referred to, to be the same. In case of doubt, I would advise Mr. Martin to send a specimen of the plant to Lloyd Bros., mfg. chemists, Cincinnati. They have a staff of expert botanists who will be glad to work it out for him. And, if he has, to them, a new drug, they will experiment with it and find its true value.

SOMETHING was said not long ago at Camp-Fire about education, to which I would like to add this thought. You can not educate a mental defective, a real one I mean; no matter how much you may try. He is a demonstrator of that old adage about leading the horse to water. He can be educated to do simple trades, but his judgment is always defective and, having the brain of a very young child, he is always in trouble. Nine-tenths of our prison population are of this class. The real brainy criminal is very seldom ever found in prison and, for more reasons than one, never will be.

The only thing the mental defective ever does efficiently and generously, is to reproduce his kind. He can be depended on to do that early and often. And when I say he, I mean she also.

These defectives we get from Europe by the thousands every year, and by the thousands every year they reproduce. They will fill our state hospitals for the insane, they fill our jails, they are practically the only bootleggers we ever catch and when they are on parole from the state hospitals and prisons, they are reproducing other mental defectives to fill the homes for defective children, reformatories, asylums, etc.

FOR this we have two remedies: We can sterilize these people when they come in contact with the law, or state institutions, or we can restrict immigration drastically, selecting them before they leave their own shores. We can require every foreign-born criminal to learn to speak and write English before he is paroled or discharged from prison. This would help us and also help them. Go to any court where bootleggers are tried and see how many of these gentry require an interpreter. Of course they are not the real offenders, and if they knew English some of them would not be bootleggers. And there are many other quite obvious reasons why they should be required to know English. Work it out for yourself.

Some feeble attempts have been made to work out our problem along these lines, but it has always been blocked by the Amalgamated Association of Sob Sisters, in one or another of its various branches.

NOW one word about the mental tests used during the war, and their startling results. Before our armies went over-seas, and even then in some instances, it was plagued by every kind and condition of fool board that the mind of man could conceive. And believe me, that aforesaid mind can think of many things, when seeking an excuse to keep out of a firing line. We had Lung Boards, Liver Boards, Kidney Boards, Orthopedic (or Feet) Boards, Balanced Diet Boards, and among the legion of boards this one for Mental Testing.

These gentleman, erudite and cultured, the product of our crack universities, usually callow youths, and invariably lacking in the slightest sympathetic

insight into the peculiar psychology of the soldier, would blow in to a camp on some ill-favored wind, report to the Division Surgeon, and it would in due course be announced that the Psychology Board was ready for action. To the enlisted men it was known as the "Nut Board." Following this announcement, all sorts of rumors would go the rounds. Such as, "If you pass these birds you will be sent to a Shave-Tail School," or "If you don't pass these Nut Specialists they will S. C. D. you home." "No over-seas for you, buddie, if you can't tell how many tots there are in a Hottentot—the Labor Battalion for yours," and so on. And then after the first hour or so—as is always the case with American soldiers, thank God—the whole thing became a joke. Just as the terrible grilling in the A. E. F. was afterward to become. And they treated it as such.

THESE Mental Testers or Psychometric Experts never took the pains to explain to the men what the real object of the test was. (And it is certainly true that a sympathetic accessible examiner can always get a higher average than one who isn't.) No! But with a cigaret hanging from one corner of his lip, and his cap tilted back on his head, the callow young medical officer, not yet dry behind the ears, would indifferently, and improperly, answer some old top sergeant's salute, or an enlisted man's, for that matter, tilt his immaculate booted legs up on the table, and begin to fire questions at the man, without any explanation whatever. This was the average way in which it was done.

Once outside, the victim was set upon by his fellows. "What did the Lieut. ask you, buddie, and what did you say?" And invariably the answers were improved on, in idiocy, by the next man who went in. The result is in the Surgeon General's Report. And it made the whole country shudder. But if the country had been behind the scenes, maybe some one else would have shuddered. Anyway, personally, I do not believe the tests were given as they should have been, or that the results mean anything at all. I base this on personal knowledge of what I saw myself. In some other camp it may have been all that it should have been. But "I am from Missouri."

Any one who knows will tell you that, for taking care of himself in action or in emergencies, the average American soldier has no equal. The champion belly-acher of the world, perhaps, but certainly the best "Thinker on his Feet" and under fire that the world has yet produced.—WILLIAM P. BARRON.

ONE of you asked W. C. Tuttle how about the names *Hashknife* and *Sleepy* were christened with. Here are the question and the reply.

Maplewood, New Jersey.

To Pard W. C. Tuttle, somewhere east of the Rockies and west of the Mississippi—

These hearty greetings: Some time ago there was published in *Adventure* your sketches of those two lovable characters, *Hashknife* and *Sleepy*. This was by request and I think everybody was well pleased with your effort.

If I am not very much mistaken every *hombre* born in this man's world has a face, body, two legs and arms—and a name. It may be Pete, Felix or Reggie, but it's a name. Characters of fiction, especially fiction founded on part-truth and part-imagination, should not be denied the honors bestowed on their partners in flesh and blood. So I think that *Hashknife* and *Sleepy* ought to have a name. Not that I would want you to do away with their very attractive and picturesque nicknames. That would take much of the kick out of yarns spun about them. Just a name so that Camp-Fire, who now knows what they look like, can say that *Hartley's* name is *Jack*, *Jim* or *Tom*, but that he is always called *Hashknife*. The same goes for *Sleepy*.

But for the love of gosh, pardner, give 'em men's names.—W. A. BOWIE.

Hollywood, California.

Dear Folks:

I wish to thank you for suggesting that these two characters must have been christened with real names at some remote time. They did. But like *Mephisto* in "Faust," who said that once upon a time he wore horns and a tail, but time had worn them off.

Both *Hashknife* and *Sleepy* were originally drawn from real characters and, unless I am badly mistaken, both of them are alive. *Hashknife* was christened George. He disliked the name. He pronounced it "Geor-r-gh." His father had been an itinerant minister in the Milk River country. I know he has been a lot happier as *Hashknife*, but in my next story I am going to let everybody know his true name.

Sleepy Stevens was christened Dave, or David. He was born in Idaho. I think *Hashknife* is in Idaho, somewhere in the hills around Lake Cœur d'Alene. Somewhere between the Pole and the Horn is *Sleepy Stevens*. He can't stay still. One of the old gang of twenty years ago was in to see me the other day. He had been a wild-riding cowboy; a fire-eating young devil, with the face of a girl. Now he's an old man, weak-voiced, his hands shaking. The war got him. He had tears in his eyes when he told me that the Government was going to let him have $50 a month, and he was heading for Arizona to prospect for gold. He had been in hospitals for three years.

He knew *Hashknife* and *Sleepy*. He talked of the stories as though they were real happenings. And when you speak of "almost human characters" I feel that you knew them, too. I want to make 'em human to you, because they are human to me, and I'm glad you will take the trouble to write about 'em.—W. C. TUTTLE.

THERE has been some strong response to my suggestion that the people of this country need to draw up a Bill of Rights that shall be embodied in the fundamental law of the land so securely that neither lawyer nor politician can make its meaning null and void.

In the following letter from Dr. Lewis I take it that his characterization is meant to

apply only to part of our immigrant citizens. There are among those immigrant citizens many who will do yeoman service toward making this democracy what the best element, native and foreign-born alike, believe it should be. I agree with his apparent judgment that the bulk of our immigration has brought us more evil than good. That is our own fault and there is no evidence that the good native American citizen is a better citizen than the good citizen of most foreign countries.

Rochester, New York.

DEAR MR. HOFFMAN: Your strenuous efforts to bring people to a realization of the "misconceptions" which they plainly hold regarding the Constitution of the United States, have been watched with a great deal of interest here. Your editorial in the recent issue was read to a group of men yesterday. It profoundly stirred them.

Now all the editorials that you may write will not bring immediate results unless put in a machine for grinding out results. I admit that the cumulative effects in conjunction with the efforts of others, will eventually do good; but not until you and I are long dead, and I want to enjoy the fruit of improvement myself, as well as have the consciousness that my descendants will also enjoy the new conditions and not labor under those which we have today.

WITHOUT speaking as an alarmist, it looks as if we are heading toward a dictatorship and at the same time preparing conditions similar to those antedating the French Revolution. The people have no chance to stop the progressive invasion by the Federal Authority; we got prohibition overnight; we went into the great war and will probably go into others, without the chance to express ourselves; our right to bear arms, except at the dictation of some power, is being taken away; we have watched combinations push milk prices steadily to the sky and we are now about to witness the same in breadstuffs; if coal goes to $42.50 a ton for slag and treated coal-dust, we have no way to prevent it; if it is desirable to run a short line of railroad from the eastern coast of North Carolina to the coal-mines of the western mountains, the politicians can and have stopped it; if public lands are needed by certain groups they seem to get them without much risk; if it is desirable to raise street-car fares and railroad fares, in most places as here in Rochester, it is done and the people pay and whimper; and so on and so on. Most of us find it a dangerous thing to speak in public and as freely as we did twenty years ago—the atmosphere has changed.

One by one the people's rights slip away so quietly that the multitude does not realize it until too late. No embryonic despot or dictator could ask for better soil or conditions in which to develop.

And then they talk to us about respect for law. In no country and at no time has the human mind ever been able to respect injustice. When we see wealth praised for the crimes that imprison poverty it is impossible to respect the power that makes such a condition possible. That is the real reason for the contempt which we have for law and lawmakers.

The second reason is that during the last twenty-five or so years we have taken in fifteen or twenty of Europe's millions. Hordes of them brought no respect for law to this country, and while kept down under the strange conditions for a time, they are now just beginning to be heard; their voice is most decidedly in favor of legal laxity, especially as they largely feel that law here, as in their old countries, is for the protection of wealth.

You are right about a Bill of Rights being absolutely necessary and now. If we are going to sit still it won't be done, however,

Why can we not set quietly to work with the best authorities we can obtain, to draw up a Bill of Rights for presentation to the country: Then put that Bill of Rights at the heading of a petition; I do not mean petition, I mean an order from the people to its law-makers. Let that order read in its first preamble or article: "We have grown tired of your inefficiency, and we hereby direct you to immediately carry out the orders given below or we shall retire you to permanent privacy."

The Bill of Rights, and whatever else is necessary to explain the evil threat hanging over the nation, should follow, and there should be prepared space for as many million signatures as can be obtained—these signatures to be arranged in state, county, city and town order so that the politician can see at a glance who is giving the orders. I am tired of wasting my vote on officials from mayor up to president. As soon as they get into office they fall into the old system and improvement becomes hopeless.

To break that system we have got to form a machine that can do it, and that machine can be formed much quicker and easier than most of us think, if you publicity men and fighters will use your talents not only for publicity but to get sufficient money to set up a headquarters in New York and start to work. It is time to act and we might as well act while we are talking.—R. G. LEWIS.

Some of you will remember that years ago I tried to create an organization such as Dr. Lewis advocates. The times were not ripe for it, and some features of my plan were ill-advised from the standpoint of practical success in organizing. But after all these years the essential features of that plan seem even more sound than they did then.

I would suggest that if enough of us are ready for such a movement we shall save time in the end if no definite move is made until there has been time for more exchange of views and for the building of a solid foundation. I speak from my former experience along this same line.

Which does not mean that there should be any delay whatever in beginning the preliminary work. But the idea is fundamental and of large proportions, so much so that it can not be put into successful practise by methods that would serve in smaller enterprises but need rounding out and strengthening by union with other fundamental ideas.—A. S. H.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.**
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5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1 American Waters
BERIAH BROWN, Coupeville, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure.* Seamanship; navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESENBERG, Apartment 347-A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure.* Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section.*)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. Islands Part 3 Cuba
WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Warner Sugar Co. of Cuba, Miranda, Oriente, Cuba. Geography, industries, people, customs, hunting, fishing, history and government.

7. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star,* Feilding, New Zealand. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

8. ★ South Sea Islands Part 2 French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn).
CHARLES BROWN, JR., Boite No. 167, Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands, South Pacific Ocean. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

9. ★ Australia and Tasmania
PHILLIP NORMAN, 842 Military Rd., Mosman, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

11. ★ New Guinea
L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua *via* Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

12. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4., Quartzsite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

13. Hawaiian Islands and China
(Editor to be appointed.)

14. Japan
(Editor to be appointed.)

15. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

16. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan
GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.

17. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters
CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure*. Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.

18. ★ Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan
GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., 60 Rue de l'Amirauté, Tientsin, China. Natives, languages, trading, customs, climate and hunting. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

19. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria
(Editor to be appointed.)

20. ★ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, La Roseraie, Cap d'Ail (Alpes Maritimes), France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

21. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand
CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, Gulfport and Coast Enquiry Depot, Turnbull Bldg., Gulfport, Miss. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

22. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East
R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

23. Africa Part 5 Morocco
GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure*. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

24. Africa Part 6 Tripoli
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

25. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunis, Algeria
(Editor to be appointed.)

26. ✠ Africa Part 8 Sudan
W. T. MOFFAT, Opera House, Southport, Lancashire, England. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

27. Turkey
J. F. EDWARDS, David Lane, East Hampton, N. Y. Travel, history, geography, politics, races, languages, customs, commerce, outdoor life, general information.

28. Asia Minor
(Editor to be appointed.)

29. Bulgaria, Roumania
(Editor to be appointed.)

30. Albania
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

31. Jugo-Slavia and Greece
LIEUT. WILLIAM JENNA, Fort Clayton, Panama, C. Z. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

32. Scandinavia
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

33. Finland, Lapland and Russia
ALEKO E. LILIUS, care *Adventure*. History, customs, travel, shooting, fishing, big game, camping, climate, sports, export and import, industries, geography, general information. In the case of Russia, political topics, outside of historical facts will not be discussed.

34. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
(Editor to be appointed.)

35. ✠ Great Britain
THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

36. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

37. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil
PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 21 Claremont Ave., New York, N.Y. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

38. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information. Questions regarding employment not answered.

39. Central America
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

40. Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

41. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, Box 304, San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

42. Mexico Part 3 Southeastern
W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Popular Ave., Takoma Park, Md., Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and states of Yucatan and Campeche. Inhabitants, history and customs; archeology, topography, travel and explorations; business conditions, exploitation of lumber, hemp, chewing gum and oil.

43. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except Strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

44. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

45. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario
A. D. L. ROBINSON, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing; farm locations, wild lands, national parks. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

46. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

47. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta
C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. Climate, prospects, hunting, fishing and yachting.

48. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

49. ✠ Canada Part 7 Southeastern Quebec
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)
✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

50. Canada Part 8 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island
FRED L. BOWDEN, 54 Mason Avenue, Binghamton, New York. Lumbering, hunting, fishing and trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography, farming and homesteading.

51. Newfoundland
C. T. JAMES, Bonaventure Ave., St. Johns, Newfoundland. Hunting, fishing, trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography; general information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

52. Canada Part 9 The Northw. Ter. and the Arctic
PATRICK LEE, Tudor Hall, Elmhurst, Long Island. General questions on this territory, especially Ellesmere Land, Baffin Land, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland and the half-explored islands west of Ellesmere. Also Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

53. Alaska
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 5647 Lexington Ave., Hollywood, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

54. Baffinland and Greenland
VICTOR SHAW, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

55. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

56. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico
H. F. ROBINSON, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance; oil-fields; hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

57. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.
FRANK EARNEST, Sugar Loaf, Colo. Agriculture, stock-raising, mining, game, fur-hunting, fishing, camping, outdoor life in general.

58. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains
FRED W. EGLESTON, Bozeman, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

59. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country
R. T. NEWMAN, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, history and inhabitants.

60. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.
J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

61. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially early history of Missouri Valley.

62. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber.

63. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

64. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River
GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See section 66.*)

65. Middle Western U. S. Part 5 Great Lakes
H. C. GARDNER, 3302 Daisy Ave., Cleveland, Ohio. Seamanship, navigation, courses and distances, reefs and shoals, lights and landmarks, charts; laws, fines, penalties; river navigation.

66. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Adirondacks, New York; Lower Miss. (St. Louis down), Atchafalaya across La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottoms, North and East Shores of Lake Mich.
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. Transcontinental and other auto-trail tours (Lincoln, National, Old Santa Fé, Yellowstone, Red Ball, Old Spanish Trail, Dixie Highway, Ocean to Ocean, Pike's Peak); regional conditions, outfits, suggestions; skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake tripping and cruising; trapping; fresh water and button shelling; wildcraft, camping, nature study.

67. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers
(Editor to be appointed.)

68. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville
(Editor to be appointed.)

69. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

70. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.
HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure*. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

71. Eastern U. S. Part 6. Maine
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. For all territory *west* of the Penobscot river. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

72. Eastern U. S. Part 7 Eastern Maine
H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. For all territory *east* of the Penobscot River. Hunting, fishing, canoeing, mountaineering, guides; general information.

73. Eastern U. S. Part 8 Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., and Mass.
HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 108 Hobart St., New Haven, Conn. Fishing, hunting, travel, roads; business conditions, history.

74. Eastern U. S. Part 10 Maryland
LAWRENCE EDMUND ALLEN, 201 Bowery Ave., Frostburg, Md. Mining, touring, summer resorts, historical places, general information.

A.—Radio

DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

VICTOR SHAW, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect; how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads —songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. GORDON, care of *Adventure*.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. (Editor to be appointed.)

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Forestry in the United States

ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass. Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild-animal life in the Forests.

G.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

H.—Aviation

LIEUT.-COL. W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., 2940 Newark St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

I.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

(Editor to be appointed.)

J.—Navy Matters

LIEUT. FRANCIS GREENE, U. S. N. R., 241 Eleventh Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. International and constitutional law concerning Naval and maritime affairs.

K.-American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

ARTHUR WOODWARD, Museum of American Indians, 155th St. and Broadway, N. Y. City. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

L.—First Aid on the Trail

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Meeting all health hazard, the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.

M.—Health-Building Outdoors

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel. Tropical hygiene. General health-building, safe exercise, right food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.

N.—Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada

R. T. NEWMAN, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. General office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General information.

O.—Herpetology

DR. G. K. NOBLE, American Museum of Natural History, 77th St. and Central Park West, New York, N. Y. General information concerning reptiles (snakes, lizards, turtles, crocodiles) and amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders); their customs, habits and distribution.

P.—Entomology

DR. FRANK E. LUTZ, Ramsey, N. J. General information about insects and spiders; venomous insects, disease-carrying insects, insects attacking man, etc.; distribution.

Q.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write LAURENCE JORDAN, care *Adventure*.

For general information on **U. S. and its possessions** write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries**, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico,** and customs receiverships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti**, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska**, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii**, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba**, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.**, Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **State Police of any State**, FRANCIS H. BENT, JR., care of *Adventure*.

For **Canal Zone**, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National Rifle Association of America, MILTON A. RECKORD, Secretary, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States **Revolver** Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National Parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Wash., D. C.

For whereabouts of **Navy men**, Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department, Wash., D. C.

British Guiana

WHERE ranching areas are inaccessible.

Request:—"I am looking for information on British Guiana.

Has British Guiana large areas suited to ranching and how would one get control of suitable land?

How reach it?

What should a prospective rancher take in with him?

Could one hope to work up from a small beginning, say $2,000?

What chance to market stock and produce now and later?

What hunting and fishing is to be found in the back areas of British Guiana? What arms are needed?

What cereals and vegetables can be grown there?

Is there a government department which issues information relative to the country?

What up-to-date books are obtainable on British Guiana?

What is the climate like on these plains? I shall be much obliged for any answers you may make to these questions and for any other information you can give me."—H. K. HENRY, Dell Rapids, S. D.

Reply, by Mr. Paul Van Orden Shaw:—British Guiana has large areas suitable for ranching, but most of them are inaccessible because of the lack of railroads and roads, etc.

Most of the equipment necessary for prospecting can be gotten in Georgetown. Take the light clothing from here that is suitable to a hot and wet climate.

Markets are distant and service irregular between source of products, therefore making a small business too hazardous—for my liking, anyway.

There is plenty of fishing and hunting in the forests but difficult to get to, and rather dangerous if you're not accustomed to the tropics.

Rice, cotton, cane, coffee, nearly all fruits.

Write the British Consulate for information, or the Bureau of Land and Mines, Georgetown for specific data. Homesteads can be got at a reasonable rent.

See J. Rodway's book on the Guianas and G. B. Bayley's "Handbook of British Guiana."

Climate is tropical but not unhealthy. October to July average 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Rain, heavy, from mid-April to mid-August.

I don't advise setting out to British Guiana with a small capital, rosy dreams and plenty of ambition. One needs much more than that to succeed in that part of the world. I've seen too many coming home to say take a shot at it anyway.

THE United States Steamboat Inspection service in a meeting of its supervisors ruled that all canoes, skiffs and yawls that operate in navigable waters must display a red light at night to avoid accidents. Motor-boats are required by law to do this now. This information comes from Mr. George Zerr, our expert on the Mississippi River.

Africa

CHANCES slim.

Request:—"Will you please give me any information at your disposal regarding Africa?

Could you give me any information regarding chances for employment of any kind in Africa?"—R. T. NIX, Chicago, Ill.

Reply, by Capt. Franklin:—I will proceed to answer your letter in the order in which it was written.

First of all, as regards employment. South Africa is not the country for anybody to go to who is not well supplied with money. Another thing, you should be in a position on arrival to be without work for about six months, as there are very few jobs going there. Also, a knowledge of both the Boer and Zulu languages is most essential. I am sorry to have to throw cold water on your scheme, but I am sure you can do much better in the United States.

Red Lake

THE biggest gold rush since the Klondike. Many queries about this strike and the best way of getting to it have come to our experts and to this office. Mr. Victor Shaw's reply below seems to cover the ground perfectly.

Request:—"Would like to have you give me a little dope on the present gold rush to the Red Lake district of Ontario, Canada. Are the reports that are coming from this district, stating that it is a very rich placer district, based on facts or fiction? Can you go there and be sure of panning out a good day's wages with the chance of making a strike? What is the nature of the soil? Are they doing most of the panning around the rim of the lake? How big is Red Lake? Can not get any information on it. Is there room enough for all that go there? How far is it from the nearest railroad station? Is there a road to the lake or must you pack the stuff over trail?"—HAROLD W. REICHART, Sharpsville, Pa.

Reply, by Mr. Victor Shaw:—The Red Lake reports are based on absolute fact.

There has been nothing like this rush since the Klondike stampede of '98; yet there is about as much gold in prospect as there was along the Yukon, at least so far as has been discovered thus far. All that section has been known as a well-mineralized region for some time. In fact, the Canadian Government went in '22 and '23 and made a geological map, including water-routes and trails. Still, no one paid much attention to the country, except for a few desultory prospectors who merely found some veins of galena and zinc, until last fall. Lorne Howie then happened upon a deposit of very good gold quartz and came out before the freeze. The rush followed at once, and was in full swing by January of this year. Stampeders staked their claims blind upon the snow, on a gamble. Dogs were bought up as far west as Winnipeg, and sold for $100, $150, and $200 an animal, or $500 for a four-dog outfit.

IT IS NOT PLACER, BUT QUARTZ CARRYING FREE GOLD.

The country is heavily covered with glacial drift and in many spots the gravels must be cleared away before a vein is accessible, or even to be seen. It is absolutely uninhabited and lies over one hundred miles from the nearest point of the railroad, Hudson on the C. N. R. R.

Red Lake is in the District of Patricia, about forty miles northwest of the outlet of Lac Seule, and northeast of the Bulldog Lake section in Manitoba. Northern Ontario has the richest gold properties in Canada, at the Kirkland Lake region.

RED LAKE IS A GAMBLE! YOU'LL BE MERELY ONE OF A MOB OF WILD-EYED LUNATICS CRAZED BY THE LUST FOR WEALTH! BUT, THE GOLD IS THERE!

Don't figure on "wages," or "day's pay," or anything at all except a chance to stake a claim—good or poor—and selling at a profit. But remember before you go that not only has this excitement sent thousands of real, old-time prospectors into that section, but right now that mineralized zone has been staked for twenty miles in length and something like five miles in width. Last January it was staked for ten miles long. Prospectors are now branching out into outlying regions, where no doubt the chances are as good or, it may be, better.

THE BIG MINING COMPANIES OF CANADA ARE ALREADY ON THE GROUND. Some of these are the Dome, Nipissing, McIntyre, Victoria, Coniagas, Noranda, Hammell, and others. The Mining Corporation of Cobalt sunk a shaft 42 feet and free gold showed practically all the way. Greatest amount of work done on any property up to middle of last month was by the Howey Red Lake Syndicate, who control 1½ miles of ground. Their vein has been opened for 1000 feet by a system of trenches, 40 feet apart, all dug through about six feet of overburden. One width of 42 feet show values of $11 a ton; another width of 27 feet shows values of $50 to $75 a ton. Specimens can of course be picked which show many thousands per ton.

Winter travel is *via* dog-team, or airplane. Snow motors were tried out and failed. Jack Elliott runs an airplane service from Hudson, and charges $100 per passenger, with 50 cents a pound freight. This rate will be lowered later, it is said. Summer travel will be by canoe along the waterways, as soon as the break-up comes. A road is being built from Hudson *via* the Pine Ridge H. B. post and Pakwash Lake. The road is now as far as Pine Ridge.

The easiest route is from Hudson, a flag station at Lost Lake, up to Lac Seule, which is traversed to its outlet into English River; down English River to Mattawa Lake, and up Mattawa River and through Pakwash Lake, Gullrock Lake, and Keg Lake, to the Chukuni River, which is the outlet to Red Lake.

ANOTHER route is from Quibell, flag station further west on the C. N. R. R., thence *via* Clay Lake and either Wabigoo River or a chain of small lakes and the Cedar River, to the English River and thence as in first route. Either route has plenty of hard portages, from one waterway to the next, for canoes or boats.

The area is part of the great pre-Cambrian plateau of rock which covers a large portion of upper Canadian territory and in which most of the richest mines are located. The country rocks are the Keewatin schists and sericite; the sericitized Keewatin rocks varying from an andesite to a dacite. It is the intrusion of the granite and porphyry into the sedimentary rocks which causes the deposition of mineral.

SEARCH FOR A CONTACT ZONE BETWEEN GRANITE AND SCHIST (GREENSTONE OR SLATE) AND THEN PROSPECT FOR QUARTZ HAVING IRON PYRITE, OR GALENA, OR SPHALERITE (ZINC ORE).

Quartz veinlets and stringers traverse the schisted Keewatin and both schist and quartz are reported to contain the gold; which is not in lumps and blobs, but finely scattered throughout the rock. If you find a vein where the schist or quartz, or both, contain much pyrite, especially if the pyrite is in the cube-crystalline form, have it tested for gold, or crush in mortar, and pan, to free the gold. The pyrite, as also galena, is generally associated with gold.

To locate and work mining claims you must take out a free miner's license costing $5 per year. A sincle claim has 51 acres and is staked in a square, 1,500 feet on a side; the center line lying along the vein cropping as nearly as possible. Three stakes are required—one at the discovery point, and one each at the point where the 1,500-foot end line crosses the vein. Your center line must be plainly marked out by stakes, or blazed trees, or piles of rock. Stakes must be 4 feet above ground and 4 inches square. Rock markers must be 2 feet wide at base and 2 feet high. Each stake on claim must have written name of claim, name of locator, and date. Stake No. 1 must have in addition: "Initial Post. Direction of Post No. 2 (giving compass bearing); —— feet lie on the right and —— feet lie on the left of the line from No. 1 to No. 2 posts."

H. E. Holland, mining recorder, has moved from Kenora to Red Lake where he now has a tent-office to issue licenses and record claims.

The Dome company maintains an assay office; and there are perhaps others, now.

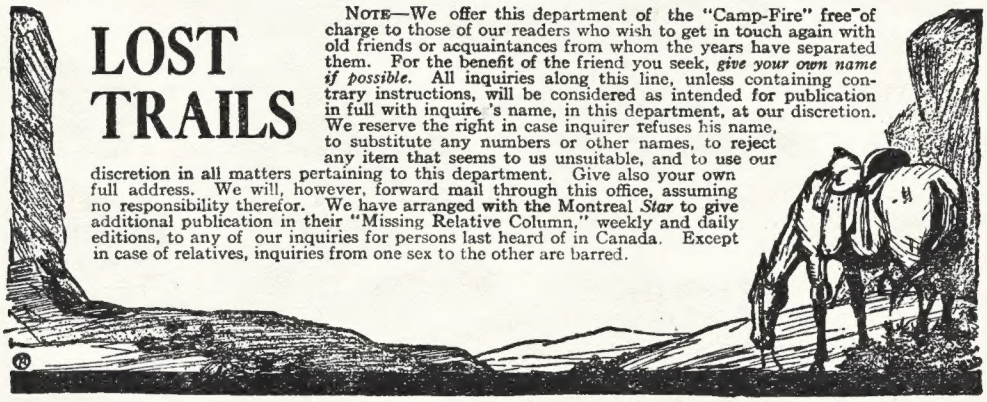
The time limit (ten days) to record claims, and to perform the first 90-day assessment and location work, has been extended by the government to expire October 1st, of this year.

Prospectors are going out into places like Rainy Lake, or Rickaby Lake which is on the Manitoba boundary about fifty miles west, and other localities which promise about as well as the original find.

The above is authentic information obtained from government sources and you may depend on it in every particular. You may obtain a government-surveyed map showing routes, by writing for free chart to the Ontario Mining Department, Toronto, Canada; or to the Director of Geological Survey, Ottawa.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

"ASK ADVENTURE" editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory not now covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address JOSEPH COX, *Adventure*, New York.



LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquire 's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

POWELL, GEORGE CARLYLE. Won't you please write to papa or mama? Your sisters Clara and May still live in Grand Island. We all yearn to hear from you. Your father.—Address THOS. POWELL, Lone Pine Farm, Thayer, Missouri.

POWELL, GEORGE FRANCIS. Age about 56, weight, about 170 lbs., about 5 ft. 11. Dark complexion, large dark eyes, very heavy lashes. Last heard from north of Omaha on reservation. Write your brother, THOS POWELL, Lone Pine Farm, Thayer, Mo.

O'ROURKE, PAT. Ex-soldier and marine. Formerly of Ballina, Ireland, and N. Y. C. Am located in Florida doing fine. Want you with me. Wire or write, I will send anything you need. Am in a position to help you, so tell me your troubles. Nephew.—Address JIM MCLOUGHLIN, P. O. Box 3148, Clearwater, Florida.

DEAN, HOMER THOMPSON. Last heard of in Appalachia, Virginia, winter of 1923-24. Would like to get in touch with him.—Address ERNEST L. ANDES, 414 East Defiance Street, Leipsic, Ohio.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

PULLIAM, W. A. Ex-Corporal, Comp. F, 361st Inf. 91st Div. Any information will be appreciated by his Buddy.—Address W. A. HOSKING, Dale Cottage, Gumeracha, South Australia.

STOOLFIRE, JOHN. A carpenter. Last heard of at Casper, Wyoming, in 1922. Please write to MRS. D. H. HARGIS, Box 195, Aransas Pass, Texas.

STOOLFIRE, GEORGE. An automobile mechanic. Last heard of at Cheyenne, Wyoming, in 1923. Anyone who knows his present location write to MRS. D. H. HARGIS, Box 195, Aransas Pass, Texas.

LEE, HENRY. Age 21, 5 ft. 6 in., blond hair, blue eyes, goes by the name of Cyclone Lee, as the "Ace of Spades." Last heard of in Arizona after returning from Chilkost, Alaska. Any information as to his whereabouts please notify (Frisco Jack).—Address JACK EVERT, 191 Seventh Street, St. Paul, Minn.

THE following have been inquired for in either the May 8th or June 8th, 1926, issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine.

ANDERSEN, DAN; Barnett, Jack; Battery D. men 2nd F. A.; Bailey, Dr. William Curtiss, M. D.; Bruen or Bruhn; Carr, Robert R.; Denney, William B.; Ex-Members of 13th Battalion Canadian R. R. Troope; Eckley, Thomas F.; Fox or Foxe, Jimmie—"Frisco Jimmie"; Hackenschmidt, Kid; Kerney, Marshal; McCaffery (Relatives); "Niece" (mother's name—Mrs. Sallie A. Conway); Olsen, Edwin Louis; Olsen, Edward; Osberne, Helen; Ramsay, Marcus; Roberts, Lewis; Roberts, Frank; Sorensen, W. N.; Seamester (Relatives); Strubbe, Captain, G. A.; Spiegal, David; Troop I, 4th Cav.; Thomas, Josia S.; Wheeler, Edward.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JULY 23RD ISSUE

The next issue of *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

SOUVENIRS A Complete Novel — ***Leonard H. Nason***
Bones was sick of K. P. duty.

HORSE SENSE A Complete Novelette — ***Arthur O. Friel***
The hill man knew about gold bricks and stocks.

THE SUSPENDED SENTENCE A Complete Novelette
The mind of a Malay. — ***Lyman Bryson***

UNDER THE FLEET — ***Charles Tenney Jackson***
The menace of the Pittsburgh barges.

THE SLAVE OF MARATHON A story of a sword through the ages — ***Arthur D. Howden Smith***
Only the free men of Greece had swords.

SHADOW — ***T. T. Flynn***
Once a railroader—

WHEN BILLY THE KID RIDES AGAIN A Poem — ***S. Omar Barker***

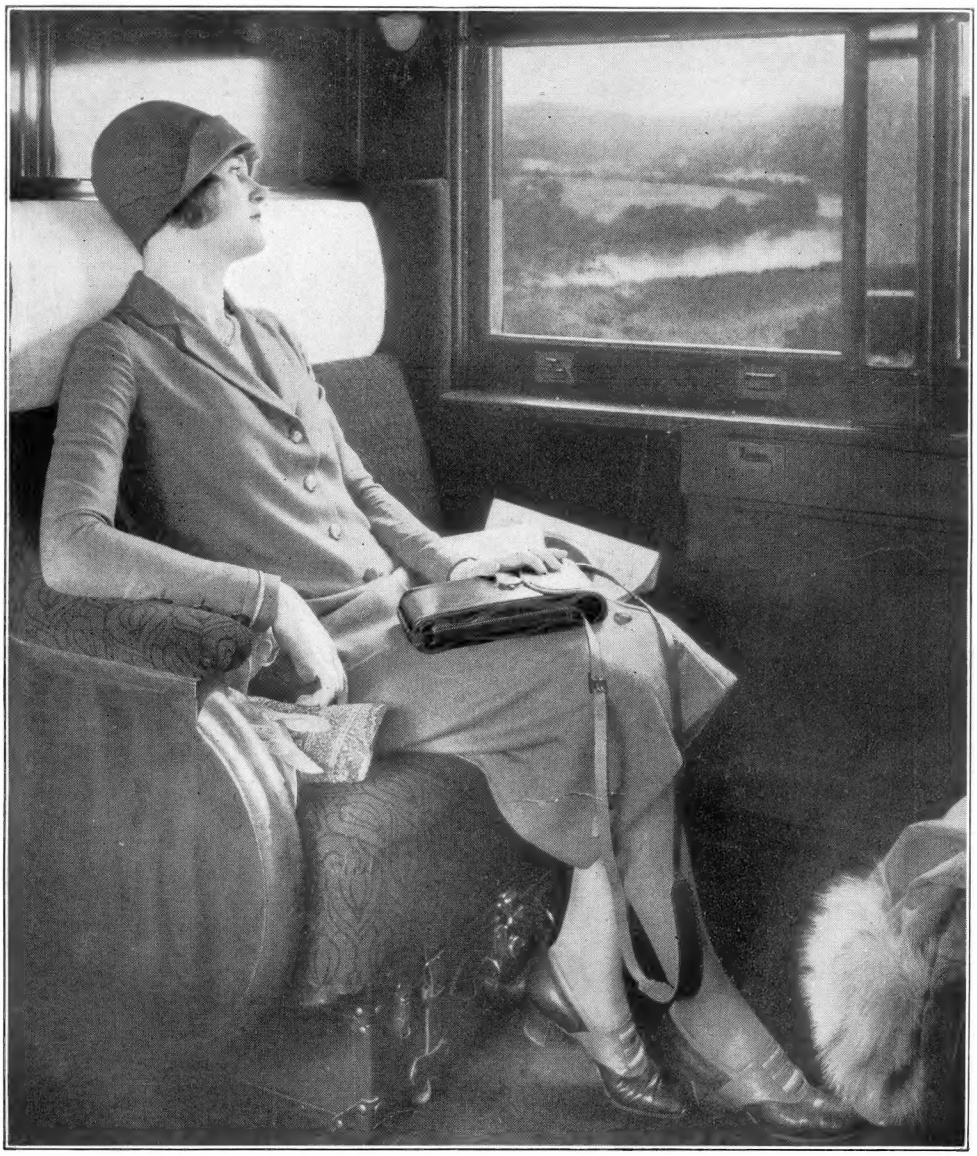
PRINCE LOUIS NAPOLEON BONAPARTE A goodly company of adventurers — ***Post Sargent***
"The man who would be king."

RAMSDEN Part IV — ***Talbot Mundy***
In a Tibetan monastery.

THE MESSIAH OF BAFFIN LAND An Article — ***Patrick Lee***
Neakoteah did not fool everybody.

WITH GRAPE AND BAYONET — ***Ernest Haycox***
"Victory or death!"

THE TWO ISSUES following the next will contain *long* stories by W. C. Tuttle, Arthur O. Friel, Robert Carse, Harold Lamb Leonard H. Nason, Gordon MacCreagh and Georges Surdez; and short stories by Arthur D. Howden Smith, Fiswoode Tarleton, William Byron Mowery, Wilkeson O'Connell, Harry G. Huse, Nevil Henshaw, Edmund M. Littel, Fred F. Fleischer, R. E. Hamilton and El Comancho; stories of adventure in all parts of the world.



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